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CHOISY.

CHAPTER I.

KNAVES AND ACES.

SOMEWHAT past the hour of eleven, one bitter cold night in December, in the midst of one of those terrible snow-storms that occasionally visit New York, a hack might have been seen forcing its passage among the drifts that filled Broadway, the horses floundering desperately under the lash of the brutal driver. It crept slowly up from Delmonico's at Chambers Street, and paused at the door of an up-town club. Its occupants, two gentlemen, emerged and entered the house, after bidding coachee to wait, — an order which he received without responding, being engaged in hurriedly throwing the blankets over his steaming horses; which done he addressed himself vigorously to the practice of gymnastics with legs and arms, pausing only to make futile efforts to resuscitate the consoling spark in his short clay pipe, and exploding in anathemas over his failure.

The two gentlemen, whom we may now inspect as they enter the warm precincts of the card-room, would be collectively described as young men, though it is probable that a wide difference exists between their ages, — how wide, however, it is not easy to determine. The elder has that wonderfully clear olive complexion which tells no tales; and though you feel instinctively that his is a face marvellously preserved rather than young, you are puzzled, nevertheless, when it is a question of years. Either would have been called a handsome man: the elder was strikingly so; while there was a peculiar charm in the face of the younger which never failed to attract, and which it was yet impossible to define. We who knew him often vainly endeavored to analyze the secret of Charley Wales's physiognomy; it seemed to be something in the turn of his head which brought the frank face full before your own; something in the quick glance of the big, brown lion's eyes with their baby lashes, inexpressibly winning, but not to be described; it gave you a little heart-warming, at any rate, and made you wonder if he had a sister who looked like him. Tom Harris was wont to say that Charley won more friends by his good looks than most men do by kindly deeds, though it is not to be inferred that he was lacking in these. As for his companion, Dick Huntley, every one who toiled five hours daily under the shadow of Trinity, in the days I write of, knew that face with its spotless Italian skin, its blazing black eyes, and the famous long mustaches which were the envy of masculine New York.

A chorus of welcomes greeted the newcomers, the younger of whom, at least, was a prime favorite at the club. They had been dining at Del's, down town, Huntley said. "I had just gone around for a quiet steak, you know, when whom should I stumble on but the irrepressible, whose movements are ever characterized by a sublime disregard of time and place. *I* had an excuse for dining at nine o'clock; but why he should have been foraging at that unseemly hour is a matter for grave speculation. Whatever he had been up to, I'll testify that it gave him a famous appetite; he has consumed more beef in the last two hours than I thought it possible for mortal man to devour. If all the *jeunesse dorée* equalled him in gastronomic prowess, we should have a famine in the land; and as for wine, he is Bacchus *redivivus!*"

We laughed at the speaker. None of us loved the man, who never entirely discarded a certain vague sarcasm in his ready flow of words; but, too clever to be ignored, and especially as Charley's friend, he held a certain title to our friendly consideration.

"What does he say?" cried the younger, turning to Huntley with a laugh, — the rare merry laugh that was so contagious; "he's 'nothing if not critical.' Just as if he did n't know I never dine at the barracks stormy evenings!"

By this term the young man dignified a palatial brown-stone front on the avenue of avenues, as by the equally idiomatic appellation of "mill" he designated a certain bank office down town, wherein he figured

2200

in a mild capacity a part of each day. Of real "barracks" and real "mills" it is probable he had a very hazy idea indeed.

"As for the charges preferred," he continued, assuming the forensic with fine effect, "they are weak inventions of the enemy," ("Hear!") "made to cover his own sin. I have always observed" ("Hear!") "that men in Mr. Huntley's position invariably adopt the poor refuge of Father Adam in the matter of the apples."

"Charles, my boy," said Huntley, blowing a far-reaching column of smoke from beneath his mustache, "you are profane!" At the same moment he drew out his watch and consulted it with close attention. This seemed a rather absurd thing to do, with that fine clock from Tiffany's staring him in the face; but the movement had the desired effect: it caught Charley's attention, and the young man suddenly turned, saying, "Ah! there 's Simms, — want to see him," and moving away as he spoke.

It is not every club or other confraternity of genial souls that can boast the possession of so estimable a functionary as Simms, — Mr. William Simms, — steward, purveyor, housekeeper, and general domestic manager at the Mayflower. In making this assertion I feel sure of the hearty support of every member of that eminently high-toned association. It would be a pleasing though voluminous task to enumerate the many excellent and endearing qualities of this our keeper of the keys; but it must suffice for the present to say that his most conspicuous claim to our general regard lay in his services in the capacity of the metaphorical "uncle," a sort of bank of accommodation on legs. He carried at all times an old and somewhat greasy-looking wallet secured by a long tongue of leather, and which was of such exceptionally large proportions that some of the younger members facetiously termed it a "valise." In this was ever to be found an unfailing supply of the circulating medium, and for this reason, chief among many others, the Lares on the hearthstone were not more respected at the Mayflower than Simms's antique and well-lined book. Most of us could recall the days when its contents comprised an assortment in charming variety of the crisp, gray notes of many kinds, — dear to our hearts, when greenbacks and national banks were undreamed-of possibilities; but no one could remember that it had ever been less greasy or less worn. It was our convenient treasury at all times; and even if one is rich, as I trust my reader is and as we all hope to be some day, emergencies may happen when the ready purse of the humblest friend is a blessing to be grateful for. The same customs prevail in different lands; and as I hear young Sawyer, who is playing whist yonder at rather high figures for points, call on Simms for "fifty more," so has it been my fortune to hear Monsieur le Baron Depenser, at the Cercle Massena in the beautiful city of Nice, demand of Gabriel, "Donnez-moi donc encore cent louis"; and Gabriel is only our friend Simms reduced to the dimensions of *le garçon suisse*. It was always comfortable to have Simms about, and he always *was* about precisely at the critical moment; so obliging too, and of course you felt no compunctions in drawing on him. You gave him little memoranda, to be sure, of the various amounts received from him, and sometimes, after a bad lot of cards, it was really surprising to find what a number of tens and twenties you were in for on his account; but again, luck would run in your favor, and you would clear the score on the spot; and of course you never failed to do the handsome thing by Simms, who was so grateful and so glad you had won your money back.

I never knew him to lose that invariable pleasant smile which implied such a depth of humble respect; not even when poor Weakly, who, after stealing half a million from the Bank of Blank, had also made a serious inroad on Simms's exchequer, and "paid all debts" by blowing out his brains. He said "Poor gentleman!" very sadly when he heard of it, and there was as little disturbance of the pleased arrangement of his features then, as this night when Charley Wales came up and asked a loan of two hundred dollars.

"Certainly, sir, very happy indeed; will you step this way?" And Charley got his money out of the trusty old receptacle which had never been known to fail but once, — the night that Fred C—— lost thirteen thousand to the *bogus* "Pole" at *écarté* in the winter of 185–.

The two friends left the club almost immediately after Charley had effected his loan, and old Ted Byrnes, sitting near, glanced at me significantly over his paper as the door closed on them. As I looked back inquiringly, he elevated his shaggy brows, and sententiously remarked, "Supper-time at Sam Worthington's in half an hour; deuced fine suppers he has too. Young Wales is having his fling all around apparently."

I say "Oh!" only, and Byrnes subsides behind his journal. I am only one of Charley's countless friends; I like him immensely, and he is pleased to give me some evidence of a reciprocal feeling; but I am not authorized to criticise his goings up and down, and if he chooses to sup at Sam Worthington's or any other midnight table, it is entirely his own affair. I am rather sorry, to be sure; if I were sufficiently intimate to warrant the liberty, I might be tempted to suggest to him that the *convives* at Worth-

ington's sometimes found the feast more expensive than even its rare viands would lead them to expect. As I am not, I hold my peace to Charley and to shrewd old Ted also, and, bundling into my wraps, plod homeward through the snow, just as the hack, with its half-frozen driver on the box and the two men within, goes plunging through the drifts around the corner.

It is but a short way from the Mayflower to the handsome house in a side street where dwells the gentleman alluded to above as the dispenser of nocturnal cheer. A quarter of an hour brought the hack to his residence, and Charley bounded up the steps, while his companion paused to have a word with the coachee. The broad steps, as well as the walk before the mansion, were cleanly swept, — a condition rare enough on such nights as this even in that aristocratic locality; but Mr. Worthington was a personage whose domestic arrangements, from the street-sweeping outside to the minutest detail within, bordered on perfection. A vigorous pull of the bell was instantly followed by the opening of a curiously concealed panel in the ground-glass of the inner door, and through this a face of ebony, in which kindness and dignity struggled for predominance, looked out with polite but scrutinizing eyes. The rapidity of this inspection was such that the invective levelled at the dusky guardian by Huntley, who "could n't abide the d—d nonsense of guarded doors, with all the snows of Russia in the air," was uttered in the rosy glow of a widely opened portal, across which and the brilliantly lighted hall beyond the new-comers betook themselves to a cloak-room. Here several other representatives of Afric's trodden race — smooth, sleek, well-dressed blacks (and nothing in nature is so smooth and sleek, being well dressed, as they) — stood, brush in hand, in graceful readiness to divest the gentlemen of their top-coats and render the myriad small services of the toilet. Never hope, reader mine, to receive such attentions with equal skill and tenderness in any other land than this, or from any other hand than Sambo's: your *garçon coiffeur* of the Palais Royal or your oily *parucchiere* of the Toledo; the clumsy wretch who comes to the call of "Boots" in a London tavern; and the yellow-haired, strong-smelling barbarian of the Lindenstrasse; — all these are frauds and deceptions when compared with our jovial black genius of the wisp-broom. In the benighted Old World, Sambo and his graceful wisp are alike unknown.

Highly pleased was the foremost dignitary with Huntley's familiar salutation. "Joe, you shade of Dis! you grow blacker every day. By Jove! we 'll have you skinned for the fleece to hang i' the heavens for funerals! — Easy with that boot!"

Joe showed two magnificent rows of teeth and laughed hysterically after the manner of his race, the others joining *con amore*, until the room gleamed with ivory and echoed with their deep guffaws. A moment later the dark faces sobered again into utter inexpressiveness; but an almost imperceptible shrug of several sets of shoulders succeeded the departure of the humorous gentleman and his friend.

"Know de young un?" whispered one.

"I should say I do, niggah!" returned he who was called Joe, rather grandly; "dat 's Mister Wales, — son of the big un over dyar." And he shot his thumb over his shoulder, to indicate the locality.

"Hi-um!" ejaculated the first, as only a negro may, and a whole orrery of rolling eyes was momentarily visible.

"We shall hardly find any one here to-night, I fancy," said Charley, as they moved down the marble hall. The words were spoken easily enough; but a close watcher might have detected a shade of nervous uneasiness in the speaker's tone and manner. His companion saw it, and laughed lightly, discoursing in a quick, pleasant way as if to dispel the shadow.

"Ah! shall we not? never think it, old fellow! You will find a full quorum here to-night, just as surely as you will find all the notable housewives crowding Stewart's and Macy's on rainy days; it 's that curious antagonism of human nature to restraint, or some profound sympathy with the elements in our mortal clay, — a bone for the philosophers; we must get Hodgson to enlarge on it learnedly at the club. Why, the stiffest game of cards I ever saw was played under nailed hatches on the Hero, with a living gale outside, and the women praying for their lives at the other end of the cabin, — twenty thousand on the table, and won by a simple pair. They always drink the hardest down there at the long bar in Broad Street when stocks are sick and everybody losing money. This is n't very apposite, I suppose; but one is not expected to be apposite after nine-o'clock dinners at Delmonico's, is he? Here we are!"

Above the great, swinging doors of studded green baize before which they had now arrived, a reflective mind, retaining some consciousness of the situation, might have seen a graven inscription as terrible in its import as that which met the eyes of dreaming Dante, and in the honest young heart of Charley Wales such an impulse of conscience was yet possible. He was not a saint in his ways of life; but he had never entered here, he had not thought indeed that he ever should. Was it of this that the elder thought, — man of the world, clever, unerring mask that he was, all-seeing but inscrutable? We may not know; but poor

Charley, hesitating on the threshold, as if the sounds of revelry alarmed him, felt himself drawn on by the arm of his friend into the blaze of light and the Babel of voices beyond.

The veteran Byrnes had spoken with his usual perspicacity in remarking on the excellence of Mr. Worthington's suppers; they were triumphs, I may say prodigies, of their kind, and served in a style and amid surroundings unequalled in luxurious completeness between King's Bridge and the Battery. The apartment which the two now entered was the theatre of the feast, — a long room lighted to dazzling brilliancy by a massive "sunlight" chandelier, and fitted with every device of art which could at once proclaim its character and add pleasing ornament to the walls. No doughty Roman ever sat down in a *triclinium* such as this. And the scene that it presented at the moment, with the great table in the midst gleaming with scores of dishes, burnished silver every one, from the tiny salt-cups to the colossal illuminated articles which sustained the smoking joints, and surrounded by a gay company who ate and drank and laughed and drank again, was a rare one to stumble on this bitter night, with the winds of winter howling without and Death stalking in the frozen streets. Wretched little Tim, crouching in the shadow of a wall with his pilfered coals while a grim policeman moves past across the way, would have thought the fairy spectacle a vision of heaven, and wondered greatly to hear the good people call it a "hell."

The table was well filled, and the hum of conversation mingled pleasantly with the inviting clatter of dishes and popping of corks. As Huntley and his companion possessed themselves of vacant places and sat down, the master of the feast, a man rather past middle age, with a fine, prepossessing face set off by masses of handsome gray hair, had risen an instant in his place and bowed a courtly welcome to the new-comers, and now addressed some sharp orders to the attendants. Nods of recognition passed between Huntley and several of the company, but Charley evidently possessed no acquaintance with his *convives*, not a few of whom, however, favored him with curious but furtive glances.

They had taken seats somewhat apart from the others, and Huntley suffered no minute to pass unoccupied. He noticed instantly the slight tremulousness of his companion's hand, as the young man raised his first glass to his lips, and rattled away thereafter in a running commentary on the persons present in his easy way, not forgetting, at the same time, to keep the wineglasses always well supplied. Charley found nothing that tempted his appetite so soon after the dinner down town; but Huntley deliberately investigated the merits of a broiled quail. "These are not precisely *nous autres*, you observe," he said, in a carefully modulated voice, "though, I dare say, you will recognize some of the faces. A queer lot Worthington draws to his table sometimes. I confess, I don't like the style; but if one feasts with Dives, one must n't make faces at Dives's friends. Look at that red-faced old sinner over there! Of course, you know *him*, — Judge Grab of the —— Court. What a wall of emptied bottles and *débris* he has about him! And now he is groaning in secret at the cruel *rien ne va plus* of his stomach. He 'd pay handsomely now for the old Roman secret of eating two dinners; and to-morrow he 'll be sending some poor devil to the Island who has stolen a loaf to cheat starvation, while his judge was gorging his skin in a kursaal and sleeps the sleep of the just! That little fellow beside him, who is talking so fast, is Tommy West, the 'Puck' of the 'Evening Tirade'; he is cramming items from the Judge, you may be sure; I fancy him scribbling short-hand notes on his knee at this moment. — (Ah! Frank, how are you? Vile night, is n't it? Small house, I fear.) — That 's Howler of the 'Varieties.' Seen him, of course; name, nature, and occupation expressed in the word. After all, you see, it is not this sort of material that keeps Worthington's mill grinding; these are species of parasites which attach themselves to his establishment as a public institution in its way. I fancy he finds it a nuisance to feed them in such numbers; but he uses them all in their various capacities, and makes them serve as a kind of *claqueurs*. A genius in his way is Worthington, and will be the Rothschild of his order if he lives long enough. But you are not eating anything. Try a quail. No? — well; pledge the game-laws to better success then, — quail in December! — shame, is n't it?"

"Who 's the individual in the red tie?" asked Charley, who drank off his Rœderer without stopping to count glasses; "he 's been looking at me ever since I sat down."

"The deuce he has! Perhaps he 's marking you; it 's Carson of the Detective Agency!" Charley did not seem to see the joke, and Huntley rattled on: "Very good fellow is Carson, but a great ass; there was never anything so absurd as the idea of his being a detective, unless skill in that profession proceeds from some occult principle in nature which acts independently of brains and is unknown to common mortals, — a faculty of 'scent' perhaps, like a dog's. In this instance it 's a plain case of the lion's skin, so far as one can see; and yet he flourishes wonderfully in his *métier*, and fairly blinds you with his diamonds; mysterious fellows moving in mysterious ways, these

detectives. Excuse my writing; just the closing prices for Worthington."

While speaking, Huntley had scrawled some lines on a card, and now sent it by an attendant to the host. Only "the closing prices," as he had said; but the oldest head in the "street" would have puzzled, I fancy, over, "Erie broke at 62,—old Southern nowhere,—*a bird in the bush, I think, to-night.*"

Whatever the meaning hidden in the sporting phrase may have been, the recipient apprehended it at a glance. Not once did his eye wander towards Huntley, nor did the amused expression with which he was listening to a profound critique on the last ballet at Niblo's, from the lips of an aldermanic personage on his right, vary a shade. But below the table his slender fingers carefully reduced the card to minute fragments and dropped them on the floor.

"Does he dabble in stocks too?" asked Charley.

"I fancy so, in a quiet way. They say he has an account at Sharp's, and is in with the bull clique on Central. I should not object to his balance, myself; it must be something handsome, and money is all of a color in Wall Street. But won't you eat anything really? Try the oysters.—Ah! Robbie, my boy, *come va?* Easy to see what you come from in your winsome court dress. Nice night for a party!"

"Only a 'sociable' at the Nesbits," responds "Robbie," who has just arrived, resplendent in evening costume, but rueful of countenance; "awful slow,—square dances, church music, and a cold feed; but one must do the proper thing, you know, in that quarter."

"To be sure!" said Huntley, with a comic grimace; "the bee goes where the honey grows. What a pity they should be so rich, those girls, and yet so — what shall we say, Robbie?"

"O, let 'em down easy, say 'plain,'" answered the elegant youth, plunging into a dish of steaming oysters before him. "Ah! this suits me! Imagine cold fowl and salads in this temperature, washed down with thimblefuls of thin sherry!—Here, you nightshade! give me some champagne.—The fellow stands and grins like a satyr while one is congealing by inches! Lively lot here to-night, eh, Huntley?—and your friend? Wales, is n't it?"

"Yes," returned the latter, rather coolly; "thought you knew him."

The table was now almost deserted, and our two friends arose and left Young America, *æt.* nineteen, to his meditations and his champagne.

"Queer fish, that Huntley. Don't know whether I quite like him, and I wonder Wales fancies him so much. It's all right, I suppose. Deuced good these oysters are! Wonder if he had been playing? Looked flustered. Handsome boy. Odd I never met him." And Robbie dropped the subject in order to devote himself more exclusively to his hot "saddle rocks."

Crossing the supper-room, Huntley and his companion entered through noiseless, swinging doors the salon beyond. It was a large double parlor extending through to the closely curtained windows on the street, with its spacious area apparently magnified by an ingenious arrangement of large French mirrors; but even the superb finish of the eating-room scarcely prepared one for the matchless luxury of this magnificent apartment. There was a lavish richness in the appointments which fairly cloyed the sense of vision, and which, it is possible, would have its effect in stimulating certain emotions in the beholder and promoting just that excited and sensuous state of mind which is most favorable to "the house." Never was sin so dressed before; never so flattering to the sense, so terribly tempting to the eye. Furniture of enigmatical cost was scattered about in graceful confusion; statuettes in Parian and bronze, *bijouterie* loading handsome bracket-rests, and inviting smaller paintings of the Jerome school. Over each of the two heavy mantels of wrought marble hung a glowing *chef-d'œuvre* of the copyist's art in life-size glory; the one a reproduction of the Naples *Danaë* (in which Titian's warm flesh is almost as golden as his gold), the other the self-same Rubens type of profligate mother Venus intent with Bacchus and their votaries on drinking each other under the mutual table,—the familiar picture of the Uffizi which one grows thirsty with looking at. The veriest anchorite, escaping the charm of these seductive pictures, would inevitably have been shipwrecked midway between them, where a glittering cabinet presented a full array of never-failing decanters, flanked by open boxes of fragrant cigars.

The whole gorgeous *ensemble*, from the velvet medallion beneath the feet (upon which the incongruous excrescences of spittoons would have startled a foreign eye) to the superficial cornices of crimson and gold which surmounted the tinted walls, was a marvel of sumptuousness, to which the great chandeliers of gilt bronze, hung with crimson swinging globes, gave an almost magic charm.

Salles de Jeu are common enough in the older world; big, blazing halls, with trickling fountains, exotic flowers, masses of fresco, and dancing arabesques: but it remained for the genius of our own land to produce the fabulous splendor of a New York "gambling-house."

A long, broad table ran across the lower

end of the parlors, and was surrounded by chairs; mimic inlaid cards of ivory gleamed from the green cloth which covered it; and the various apparatus of the game, including tall piles of divers-colored chips, were thereon arranged under the skilful superintendence of the several functionaries. Hazard has taken many forms and rejoiced in many names since they gambled on their finger-ends in the streets of old Rome.

This was called "faro," in French *pharaon*, — a plague of Egypt that has fallen on our time.

Most of those who had left the supper-table lingered briefly over their cigars about the reading-table and dropped away one by one; but several surrounded the gaming-table and shared or watched its fortunes. Our two friends smoked apart with Worthington, who had joined them, and who conversed in the well-schooled, easy manner of his order. As I have said, he was a handsome man, with a clear, smooth-shaven face, finely cut features, and keen, deep-set eyes; but not even the studied smile or the graceful suavity of his address could entirely hide a sinister something which pervaded him, and was soonest detected in the lines about his mouth. His dress was unexceptionable, and its only ornament a brilliant of great size which sparkled in his shirt-front. He was undeniably attractive, — a well-graced actor on his strangest of stages. And just as he had dressed his rooms with cunning art, so nature had flung an attractive glamour about his person: the eye found no outward sign of what the heart might feel, — the nameless evil that lay beyond.

"Very kind of you, Mr. Wales, very kind of you indeed, to honor us with a call," he had said, coming up to them and extending his hand for a greeting, which Charley acknowledged rather awkwardly. "Such a wretched night as it is too; as much as a man's life is worth to be out in it, I should think. I have wished a dozen times this evening that my house could offer accommodasions sufficiently extensive and pleasant to tempt all these good people to stay the night out. As it is, I fear it would come to camping out on chairs and sofas with 'short commons' in bedclothes. Ah! I see they are going out into it again. — Good night, Judge. Good night, gentlemen. I wish you a safe passage; if you can't do better you can come back, you know. — Nothing stirring in the street, I suppose, Mr. Wales?"

"I know of nothing. Huntley is the man for 'points.'"

"Ah! yes, to be sure; and the man to improve them as well, if we may be allowed the surmise; eh, Mr. Huntley? Will you excuse me? I see the Judge is in trouble with those stupid servants." And he passed swiftly into the hall, from whence came the echo of the deep-voiced dignitary of the —— Court in tones of wrath.

"Let's look at the game," said Huntley. "I see Sanders of the Whirlwind Club is playing, and it will be worth watching."

They approached the table and took places in the ellipse surrounding it, which comprised a score of men, seated and standing, half of whom were engaged in play. The man at the cards, a mechanical creature with a face of marble, through whose fingers the paper squares seemed to glide by a momentum purely their own, favored the arriving couple with a scarcely perceptible glance; and the two assistants beside him, impassive machines like himself, dealing out and collecting the losses and gains and keeping the busy score, did the same from sheer force of example. Aside from the habitual solemnity of these men, which was, however, frequently relaxed in smiles at some winning player's joke, the scene savored little at this moment of the gaming-table as we see it in its glory in other lands. The lively rattle of conversation and occasional well-put jest, the innovation of liquors and cigars at the table, and, above all, the absence of that long-drawn moment of suspense which is inseparable from the European *roulette* or the deal at *trente et quarante*, divested the picture of much of the repulsive effect which horribly strained attention and death-like silence give it abroad, and made it even more dangerous.

The play was at the full. "Two aces out!" "Queen-deuce!" "Copper the jack!" "Chips for that!" "Make your bets, gentlemen!" "How will you have them?" fell in a chorus on Charley's ear, mingled with the clicking of the ivory *jetons*. Among the seated players was a young man whose burning cheeks gave token of the perilous excitement within. He had been winning largely, and at the moment he caught Charley's attention was in the act of exchanging a mass of chips for the corresponding amount in notes.

"That's Sanders," whispered Huntley; "they tell me he won fifteen thousand here last night, and is doing nearly as well to-night. 'Pon my word, I feel rather in the vein myself. I believe I will try them a turn or two. Chips for this, please," he added, tossing a roll of bills to the banker; "fives and tens; and, waiter, some Bourbon and cigars. You 'll have some, Charley?"

The attendant served the desired articles with miraculous despatch, and Charley drank off the liquor without noticing the quantity. There were two vacant seats near them, and Huntley took one of them, making place for Charley, who, intent on the game, sat down mechanically beside him. Huntley staked ace full for a considerable amount, and won;

moved to the deuce, and won again; and was a third time successful in the same corner, having thus quadrupled his original *mise*. He shrugged his shoulders slightly, and said to Charley, who had watched his play, "Ought to have doubled. Are you coming in?"

Young Wales had sat there with the fever rising in his veins. To stand by that table was dangerous; to sit by it was to fall. He nodded, threw some notes across to the nimble-fingered "banker," and in five minutes more he had become oblivious to all the world and the things thereof beyond the ebb and flow of the noisy *jetons* and the white-faced, emotionless man who manipulated the swift cards.

O that strange intoxication of play! that something which thought cannot penetrate or words describe, — terrible, inexplicable, inhuman! Who shall analyze it, who rob it of its delirious attraction, who resist it? God save us! most of us have felt it at one time or another; but to feel it always! It would kill most of us, I think; but there are men who live on in its atmosphere a sort of vampire-life, who have won the secret of the old alchemists, draining the poison-cup and laughing at death. This one whom we meet in our walks of life and speak of in undertones as a "gambler" belongs no longer to our common world; he can exist no longer on the every-day food of humanity, and there has ceased to be a charm for him in those things which constitute the happiness of men. He has found another world within this world, and changed his being to fit therein; by the loss of everything he has gained a something, and almost defeated nature by achieving the unnatural. He is a man apart, — a living horror, from whom there are none of us so strong that we do not shrink with a shudder, knowing what a little will make us like him, and what a secret life is his. There is no escape, for there can be no cessation; no rest, for chance, abetted as it may be, as it almost always is, by fraud, is ever uneven; no profit, for all values are wiped away for him who lives from cast to cast; nothing but the wild swift course down to the bitter end, broken by intervals of desperate reverses or frenzied transports of success, and ceasing invariably with mysterious but significant abruptness.

Poor Charley Wales was a gambler no more than you and I, who have looked down at the savage rage over some broad, protecting shoulder, felt its cruel influence, and come away sobered but unscathed. Led by a cunning hand within the magic circle, he felt, perhaps, something of his danger, but did not dream of falling. Who ever did? Who, at his age, walks not gayly along the dizzy precipices of to-day, weaving some bright dream for the morrow? Once within, he went on blindly and floundered miserably at last. Let us be charitable to the man whom, instead of ourselves, partial fate plunged into the abyss.

He played at first with marked success, and, staking heavily, to "follow his luck," as Huntley suggested, gained largely, and pursued the mad career with intense excitement. Drink after drink of burning spirits passed his lips, and countless cigars were consumed with reckless rapidity; he never noted the frequency of either, or that they were served to him assiduously without his command, any more than he noted Huntley's infrequent play and the gradual departure of the other gamesters. He was aware only that the statue-like dealer had disappeared, and that Worthington himself, smiling and affable, had taken his place, drawing the cards with an equally dexterous hand. "Robbie" had come in a long time before and put down a note, "to pay," as he would have said, "for his supper"; only in this instance it won another, whereupon he incontinently pocketed both and went his way, not without a shrewd glance at Charley's excited face.

"Quite a new thing for him, I should say," was the reflection of the period's child. "Humph! hope he 'll get off cheap, that is all!"

The fortune of the table changed at last. The circle of other players had dwindled down to some three or four betting at random and paid with a carelessness that must have excited the suspicions of a sharp observer as to their real character; and the busy hum of the hour before was succeeded by almost unbroken silence. It seemed the proper moment, and Charley's store of "chips" and notes began to melt away as it had accumulated; even more rapidly, indeed, for never does the player brave the hazard so recklessly as when the losing turn arrives. The effect on the young man showed how completely he was under the fearful spell; the desperate stakes, the angry exclamations, the trembling hand and convulsed face; — even Huntley, who watched him with a strange expression of impatience on his face, shivered once or twice at the spectacle. When the very last of Charley's "chips" went back to the bank, however, he said with well-assumed carelessness, "You are not in luck, Charley; better break off." But even as he spoke he showed a handful of his carefully reserved chips on a card.

"D—d if I do," cried young Wales, upon whom the reckless drinking of the previous hour was beginning to tell violently in this momentary respite from the excitement of actual play. "Loan me some chips," he added, stretching out his hand imperiously

as he spoke. Huntley smiled, and pushed the whole pile towards him.

"There 's the lot, if you want them; three hundred, I think. Plenty to play on if you strike the vein, — eh, Worthington?"

The gambler smiled back, and knocked the ashes daintily from his cigar in the interval of the deal.

"I have seen a bank broken on a start of just one sixtieth of that amount, say five dollars," he replied; and added to Charley, "My best wishes for your better success, Mr. Wales."

The words attended the draining of freshly filled glasses, after which the game went on. It was all one way now; in three brief casts of the cards the borrowed stakes had followed those gone before. Charley sat in his place a moment, staring moodily at the table, whereupon the three or four other players seemed suddenly inspired with fresh interest and played with great success. It was only a moment, but evidently an anxious one for his companion, who watched him with hawk's eyes. Charley broke the pause in a hoarse, changed voice: "Give me some brandy, waiter, your whiskey is rubbish; and a cigar. — Got any money, Huntley?"

Worthington smiled affably at the insult to his whiskey, which was really very fine. And Huntley drew out his *porte-monnaie*.

"I 'm not rich to-night, Charley, but I can give you something, I guess. Let 's see — two hundred — thirty — fifty — five, two fifty-five — that 's my pile — *tout ce qu'il y a là dedans!* If you *will* play, it is yours."

Charley seized the notes and played them, without awaiting the exchange for chips. Luck came back to him one little moment, just long enough to fan the dull blaze into a raging flame again; then, in a few adverse turns, left him penniless as before. Again he sat an instant in gloomy silence. It was an awful moment, and one which burned itself upon his memory, despite the numbness of his senses, haunting him for months afterwards, a phanton of regret and shame. Huntley was making an entry in his memorandum-book; but he did not fail to catch the young man's glance as it wandered towards him.

"Just a record, you know," he said, laughing, "I shall not worry about it. Five fifty-five, was n't it? Quite enough with what you have lost. You are not in luck to-night, Charley. Better go, had we not?" He rose as he spoke; but a sober observer would have seen the devilish anxiety in his face, and how far from his heart was the desire to go.

"Wait!" said Charley, hoarsely, rising also as he spoke. He was obliged to stand in his place a moment, and clutch the back of his chair, while the room with its gilded walls and dancing lights swam in a wild whirl before his eyes. Then with a thick-spoken oath he staggered across to the liquor-stand, and, pouring a glass from the first decanter he encountered, drained it at one gulp. The draught nerved him for the further effort of reaching the secretary in the upper salon, — an elegant affair of rosewood and green morocco, hung with little packages of blank checks and drafts on all the city banks, and offering every convenience for their filling up. It was with none of these that he had to do, however. With some difficulty he selected a paper from the contents of his pocket, and managed with desperate momentary firmness to write a rapid indorsement across it.

His dearly purchased strength barely enabled him to regain the table, where the mechanical motion of cards and *jetons* went silently on. More than one pair of eyes had watched his movements with intense interest, though, had he been competent to detect it, he would have found no change or emotion in any face when he returned.

He sank heavily in his seat, and threw the crumpled paper on the board with a demand in thick, almost unintelligible tones, "Money for that!"

An evil chance seemed to have guided Charley Wales's footsteps all this day. It moved him to stop at the Metropolitan on his way up town, to see an old acquaintance who was over from "the Jerseys." In the office he encountered Mr. Perkins, — President Perkins of the Perkinsville Bank (National), who was at that moment in something of a quandary, and who greeted him with effusion.

"Ah, Mr. Wales! how fortunate! You come in the nick of time to my relief. May I ask your attention a moment?"

Inasmuch as Mr. Perkins, or, more properly, the institution which he represented, kept a valuable account at the great banking house of Wales, Burton, & Co. in New York (for Perkinsville, be it said, whereof the Perkinsville National is the principal financial agent, settled and mostly populated by the family Perkins, is a manufacturing town of considerable pretensions in the neighboring province of Connecticut), the young man acknowledged the warm greeting of the country banker with great respect, and was properly glad to be of service. He excused himself to his friend and stepped aside with the President, who drew a portentous wallet from some obscure recess of his waistcoat.

"I intended to call at your office to-day, but I had so much to do, and was so delayed by the storm, that I did not succeed in getting down at all. I am in receipt of a telegram which really makes it imperative for me to return home by the evening train;

and I must ask you to take charge of this draft and have it credited to us in the morning, if you will be so kind; having brought it so far myself, I felt reluctant to trust it to the mail. You will give me your personal receipt, please; business, you know; thank you! I see they are calling me for the coach. Please give it your attention in the morning. My respects to your father. Will be down again in a week. Good evening!" And Mr. Perkins hurried away after the Titan who was bearing off his portmanteau, leaving Charley standing with the gaudily illuminated scrap in his hand, which, through the medium of certain written expressions interspersed among divers designs of a pictorial character (inclusive of a rather flattering vignette of Miss Prudence Perkins in the guise of Columbia smiling seductively at Industry, an idle youth with a superabundance of ribbon on his hat, who leaned upon his scythe in the opposite corner), informed the world that the Bank of Commerce in New York was requested to pay at sight to the order of Messrs. Wales, Burton, & Co., the sum of ten thousand dollars," and charge the same to the account of the Perkinsville National Bank of Perkinsville, Daniel Perkins, Pres." It was not an affair of very great moment to Charley, who simply put the draft in his pocket-book and rejoined his friend; but the financial gentleman from the "districts" did not fail to revolve the matter in his mind during the long transit to Twenty-seventh Street; and though he in no way doubted the entire safety of the proceeding, he acted upon the suggestions of great business caution (which he no doubt inherited from his respectable ancestry, and which is said to characterize the good people of the "district" from which he hailed), and stole time at the station to write a brief note to Wales, Burton, & Co., informing them that he had handed that evening to their Mr. Wales, Jr., "their No. 72 B'k Com. $10,000," etc., which he "presumed would be at hand with receipt of this advice." It may be added that this note went safely to post that night, and was duly deposited in the desk of Mr. Wales, Sen., the following morning, while his son was still in bed with a desperate headache and a heart-ache beyond cure.

The same evil chance led Charley to tarry at the Metropolitan with his friend, and, as the latter was going home by a night train, finally to propose dinner at Delmonico's, the two having lunched together at a late hour down town, which was conveniently *en route* for the Jerseyman. At the Chambers Street restaurant they chanced on Mr. Huntley, who, being a friend of Mr. Wales, was very happy to meet Mr. Wales's friend, and the three had dined together as men may dine at Delmonico's, and only there in the world. It was a cheerful feast that turned the cold world without to laughter, and from it the friend from the country went homewards dreaming sweet dreams all along the hideous Passaic flats. Long months afterwards Charley recalled that hour and taxed his confused memory for every detail of its events; what was most prominent in his recollections was his own ready humor at the expense of President Perkins, of whom he had given a ludicrous personation in his account of the incident of the draft, and the subsequent drifting of their conversation to the subject of gaming. He remembered that Huntley invested this part of their *causerie* with rare interest by drawing lifelike pictures of the Old World kursaals, and relating some curious reminiscences drawn from less public sources. Charley Wales, in general esteem, was a "young man about town," as the popular phrase is; but so much of the rather undefined *menu* of distractions which that typical personage affects as comes under the head of play was limited, in his case, to occasional whist or pool at his club. Beyond this his gaming experience had never extended; he heard often enough of the high play at the various notorious resorts, of their luxurious splendor and singular prosperity, but gave the story only so much attention as curiosity at the moment prompted. He had always declined invitations to look in at some of the gorgeous "hells," declined with a certain emphasis, moreover, regarding them and the class who frequented them as essentially foreign to his own circle; and how it came about that, after the dinner this night, he had gone with Huntley to Worthington's, he was never able clearly to understand. Some remark of his implying a certain curiosity about high play had been met by Huntley with the suggestion that it was "something which ought to be seen *once*," — the *animus* of which suggestion has led young feet across many a dangerous Rubicon. They could "drop in at Worthington's in 00th Street at supper-time for ten minutes," Huntley said, "and see the 'tiger' in his glory."

Charley had borrowed the money of Simms, — finding he had none about him, — feeling the natural desire of one in his position to enter among men on an independent footing, and with no definite intent to play. He might risk the money and lose it, for that matter; it was a trifle for him, and would have cost him no more afterthought than he had carried home many times after bad cards at the Mayflower, and slept peacefully, nevertheless. And so they had "dropped in" at Worthington's, and looked, — and stayed.

When the draft fell upon the table, Worthington glanced sharply at Charley, who glared back at him with sullen eyes

and angrily reiterated his demand. The gambler took up the paper, gave it a momentary inspection, and, unperceived by Charley, stole a look towards Huntley. The latter had risen quickly at the young man's return, and moved across to the sideboard, where he was engaged in filling a glass rather nervously when he met Worthington's eye. He shrugged his shoulders and gave a slight inclination of his head in answer, and, without drinking the liquor he had poured out, sauntered off and threw himself on a lounge by the reading-table.

Worthington opened a small side-drawer in the table, and took therefrom ten crisp, new notes, which he handed to Charley with his unfailing smile, after depositing the draft in their place. Young Wales noted neither their number nor denomination, but clutched them fiercely, and threw some of them on the mimic ace.

"Draw your cards, d—n you!" he cried, in thick, uneven tones. Alcohol and tobacco had wellnigh achieved their work upon him, and he rocked unsteadily in his seat as he spoke. One of the men sitting near sidled up to him cautiously, and Worthington, albeit as unruffled and smooth as ever, dealt the cards very rapidly. The waste was a knave, the bank's card *an ace;* the queen won for the players, and Charley had lost.

Probably no external influence could have longer kept alive a single spark of intelligence under the heavy stupor which was creeping over body and brain; but a spasm of feverish excitement seemed to thrill him again, even as his head was sinking on his breast, and to nerve him with strength to reach the bitter end.

"Gone again!" he mumbled. "All right, old fellow; try it again, — ace!"

The movement of the cards was lightning-like. Of course, he lost. "Deuce wins, ace loses," was the dull echo from the unmoved dealer.

It seemed for an instant as if the young man had been shocked into something like consciousness of his situation; his face was livid, and he fastened the big brown eyes on Worthington with an expression that tried even the steel nerves of that veteran.

But it was for an instant only; with an unintelligible oath he pushed the remaining notes upon the card: "There, d—n you; take th' rest, — on the ace!"

This movement cost the last remnant of his strength, and he would have fallen from his chair after it, had not his neighbor put out an arm and supported him. The melancholy farce of the falling cards followed, — scarcely need of it now; and after it the clear, cold voice of Worthington, "Deuce wins, ace loses! Sorry for your bad luck, sir. Gentlemen, the game is closed!" And the tally-box rattled sharply, as the weary keeper sent it spinning into the middle of the table.

The sounds had no meaning for Charley. He had sunk into a helpless, almost unconscious state, and was quite insensible to surroundings.

"Hold him a moment, and call Huntley," said Worthington, as he rose from his seat. The mask had fallen from his face, on which an expression of disgust had replaced the studied smile.

Huntley came hurriedly forward. He spoke to no one, but with assistance got Charley up and arranged his wraps. Outside a coach was waiting, the horses blanketed to their ears, and the driver drowsing inside. The sky had cleared, and the bright starlight of the winter morning shone down on the snowy streets.

"Leave the windows open, John, and take a turn about the square with him, before you take him home," said Huntley to the coachman.

Some time later the carriage drew up before a tall mansion on the avenue. The driver descended and ran nimbly up the steps. His knock was almost instantly responded to by a man-servant, and the two, with some difficulty, got the young man into the house, where the coachee left him, and hurried away. It was no light task to convey the living yet helpless burden up stairs; but at last it was accomplished, and the young man fell at once into the deep slumber of body and brain which follows excess, and which, happily, has no dreams.

In an upper apartment of the gambler's house the two men, Huntley and Worthington, seated before a glowing grate, held a brief conversation following young Wales's departure.

"It 's all right, I suppose," said the latter in conclusion, and rising as he spoke; "but it was drawing it pretty strong for the young one; I don't see your object."

"It is not necessary that you should; and mind you, Sam, I must stand clear in this, whatever turns up," responded Huntley, rising also, and preparing to go. "Be sharp with the draft; let Knarles see to it in the morning at once. The old man may kick at it; but he must 'pony'; honor is his religion, and, after all, it 's a mere bagatelle for him. Don't tell Knarles too much, you know. No, thanks, I 'll not stop. I've my game to play, and must stay at the hotel. Beastly headache I've got! How he did drink! Good night. See you at Schedler's at noon."

"Good night, — and be d—d to you for a precious scoundrel!" added Worthington in an undertone, as the door closed on the

other. "Not the sea side of you on a dark night, if I know it, my boy!" And with this significant reflection Mr. Sam Worthington betook himself to his luxurious bed.

CHAPTER II.

CAST OUT.

When Charley Wales woke the next day with the meridian sun streaming in at his windows, he was in a condition of mind which would have been chaotic, if a great pain had not given it some character. The old servant stood by his bedside as he opened his heavy eyes.

"I made bold to wake you, sir; it is nearly lunch-time, and Miss Emma thought you would wish to be called."

"So late! I will get up. You may leave the soda, Stephen."

Stephen withdrew, and Charley lay gazing with burning eyes at the faint winter sunshine on the wall. A dizzy host of memories were struggling for precedence in his aching brain, but for a time he could grasp no one of them clearly. What was it? What had occurred? Ah!—the dinner down town with Birch and Huntley—President Perkins—the club—Simms—Worthington's—supper—detective—*chaos*. Out of this, in a little time, a vague, chilling memory took shape and grew,—the dazzling *salons* and the faro-table, the circle of faces dancing fantastically about, and only the one horrible, unmoving figure in the midst, with set lips and unlaughing eyes. He had played, too,—O yes!—the money borrowed from Simms—lost it, and—and Huntley's and—*O my God!* He started upright in his bed, and clutched at support for an instant, while the room—the handsome, cheery room, with its pictured walls and its scattered wealth of *bijoux*, gathered with so much artist-pleasure in the years gone by—swam in a mad whirl before his eyes. A moment later and he was searching with shaking hands among the papers in his pockets, searching wildly but silently, with compressed lips and a strained look in the big brown eyes.

No, it was not there; the truth came back to him more clearly now, and there was no need to search. He sat down with a groan, appalled and sickened; brain and body shared the blow,—both nervous and weakened with poisoned drink. The weight crushed him, and for the first time in his young life the courage faded from the brave boy's heart.

His had been a pleasant life, a merry, morning gallop across green fields and sunny hills, like yours and mine, reader, in the long gone years. There are pitfalls all among the flowers and the fairness, but never a thought for them has "my lad"—

> "When all the world is young,
> And all the trees are green."

So he tumbled bodily, like many another as open-eyed, as brave, as thoughtless, as hopeful; but he was a free rider and fell hard. Did any one, I wonder, ever traverse that flowery road without a stumble? I think not; not even *you*, honored or reverend sir, who bear aloft the strong lance of justice, or teach us the right way. Alack! if the whispered tales of other days shall sometimes verge on truth, some of you tripped grievously in your time, and 'scaped some very muddy slums by a hair! We are all of a mould, and poor old Jack Falstaff is our apologist. What may we do, indeed, in these days of villany, when Adam in his innocency fell?

It was not of his pleasant life, however, that young Wales thought. If he groaned in remorse, he did not groan in regret. He remembered what he had done,—for he was one whom no depth of intoxication could render oblivious to an act of guilt,—and the horrid fact stunned him for a time with its weight, ill as he was from the effects of excess. But though physically weak, he was resolute enough to think calmly, and close on the heels of what he had done followed the thought of what he must do; but it was here that the situation took on its most dreaded phase, for it raised before him the figure of his father.

It could be said that Edward Wales, the banker, had a son, but it could scarcely be acknowledged that Charley Wales had known a father. The hard, cold man of gold possessed none of the qualities which we associate with that name. He had been the terror of Charley's earlier years, removed but ever remembered, as he was the oppressive shadow of the young man's later life. To meet him in this crisis, and to meet in him the judge, was the ordeal from which Charley shrank.

The sun was adding its cheerful light to the warmth of a crackling fire in the breakfast-room as Charley entered it, a half-hour later, struggling to look at ease. A young girl stood by the grate as he came in, and turned quickly, with a half-reproachful, half-anxious face, which grew very tender as she noted his pallor and haggardness; but she said, merrily enough, "The 'late' Mr. Wales, as usual. What a bad boy you are!"

"Spare me, little coz," he answered with an effort at gayety sadly in contrast with his nervous step and manner. His eyes fell unaccountably before her own, and he seized and fumbled the paper without speaking, while she rang for lunch, and sat down at the table. She glanced furtively at him

several times, as she busied herself with the coffee, before speaking again.

"You are not well, I fear, Charley; yesterday was such a day! You ought to be careful. Were you kept down town by the snow?"

"Yes; it was awful, was n't it?" (He was thinking how awful *it* was, and wondering behind his paper what she would think of him if she knew *it*.) "I did n't care to ride up with the governor, you know; so — Well, to tell the truth, I was near not getting up at all." And he wished he had not, poor boy!

"How tiresome! I wondered what you would do all day, as I watched the storm from the window. It quite reconciled me to the misfortune of being a woman, as Clara would say, to see the pitiful state of these famous business people in the omnibuses. Uncle himself was late last evening."

He was not listening, and she said no more, but watched him with troubled eyes as he left his food untasted, and rose to go.

"Won't you have another omelette? I fear that was cold."

"No, it 's good enough. I 'm not hungry, and I must go down; ought to have been at the office two hours ago. One o'clock! How I slept!"

He rang for his coat, which she took from Stephen and helped to put on.

"Never mind, Em; thanks. I — you did not find a paper — that is, anything in these pockets, Stephen?"

"No, sir," replied the servant. "Your hat, sir?"

He moved to the door, and Charley turned to follow, but something touched his arm.

"Good by, for all day."

She stood with her hand extended and a smile on her face, — a delicate, beautiful face it was, — but in her sober eyes was all the instinctive intelligence of her woman's heart, which had fathomed his disturbed manner, and sought to know its hidden cause. A world of anxiety and undisguised affection was in the gaze; he saw it and hesitated, took her hand, and hesitated still; then, wrenching it almost convulsively, turned away to the door with a tear-choked "Ta, ta." She crossed to the window and sighed, saw him go by, walking with his quick, elastic step, and then returned to gaze silently at the fire, where she still remained when the wondering servant came to remove the untouched luncheon.

It was "late-delivery" time in Wall Street when Charley descended from the omnibus at his father's office, and went up the broad steps with a tremulous heart, — "late delivery," for the ragged bits of stained and unprepossessing paper clutched in the hands of hatless and breathless clerks dashing madly along the swollen curbs, and plunging into the river of mud and snow which filled the street, — "late delivery" for the millions of men's possessions which they hurried thus from side to side, — "late delivery," too, for poor Charley, going in to meet his fate at that familiar threshold.

A strange visitor had preceded him at the house of Wales, Burton, & Co., on that morning of sunshine and sodden streets, by an inch of time; and it is in inches that time brings on its revenges. Mr. Wales, in his private office, was running rapidly over his large morning mail at his usual hour, when a clerk announced that a gentleman wished to see him. The interruption was unusual, and Mr. Wales did not like unusual things in business.

"Name?" was all he vouchsafed in response to the message, without pausing in his work.

"Here is his card, sir; 'Mr. Knarles.'"

It was not a promising cognomen, and the banker frowned at it. But he said, sharply, "Show him in."

Mr. Knarles's appearance was not prepossessing, — a lean, sly-faced, sharp-eyed little man, in a rather seedy black suit, — and the banker frowned again as he glanced up at his visitor. He recognized him, however, — he never forgot a face, — as one of those parasites of crime who live on the courts. In fulfilling the one unavoidable duty of citizenship in the jury-box, he had once beheld in Mr. Knarles the earnest champion of unmitigated villany; and it was with sensations of decided repugnance that he received his obsequious salute.

"I must beg you to state your business briefly; I am fully occupied," he said, curtly, motioning the lawyer to a seat. Mr. Knarles had not completed his very profound obeisance, but he accepted the position with cheerfulness and alacrity.

"I appreciate the value of your time, Mr. Wales," he began, with bland equanimity. "It would be difficult to find any one in New York who could fail to do so, I am sure. I will occupy as little of it as the case admits. May I ask if we are entirely private here?"

"Quite," responded the banker, with some impatience, and still busy with his letters.

"Excuse my pressing the point, sir, it is important."

Mr. Wales turned off from the perusal of a portentous Western letter covering an infinitude of those highly illuminated drafts, such as the good men of the border delight in, and, turning in his chair, pointed to the door. "You may turn the key, sir, if you think it necessary."

He thought he had divined the man's errand; his presence could be accounted

for in only one way, and he merely wondered that this man should have preceded their own regular detective. But he was alive to the requirements of the case, and as the lawyer returned to his seat he gave him his full attention.

"My business lies in this, Mr. Wales," said the lawyer, drawing, as he spoke, a slip of paper from an emaciated memorandum-book, and extending the same. "Will you examine it?"

The banker received and inspected it rapidly but closely, pausing only to note the indorsements. He had not yet read the note of President Perkins, and he was puzzled; but his face told no tales.

"How came you in possession of this?" he asked abruptly.

"It is held by my client, who received it in ordinary course of business," was the ready reply.

"And who is your client?"

"Mr. Samuel Worthington of 00th Street."

Mr. Wales re-examined the draft, with the tenor of which the reader is familiar. It bore the indorsement, "Pay S. Worthington. Wales, Burton, & Co., *per* C. W., Att'y." The banker's face grew a shade more rigid as he studied these lines, but the change would easily have escaped a less observant eye than that of Mr. Knarles. That gentleman was something of an amateur in the study of physiognomies, and he felt no little admiration for the severely impassive man before him, whose impenetrable expression almost defied scrutiny.

"You must be aware," said Mr. Wales, coldly, but without removing his eyes from the draft, "that this is worthless."

"On the contrary, sir," responded the lawyer, with an affectation of alarm, "it was received by my client in good faith, as I have said, and in regular course of business. The full amount has been advanced upon it, — advanced, I may say, without hesitation, as the very honorable character of the indorser —"

"The indorsing party has no power to consign this draft; his power of attorney is a limited one, and applies to a simple detail of office business only. The indorsement, as I have stated, is worthless."

The banker spoke with impatience, but Mr. Knarles deliberated soberly a moment before replying. He seemed even affected by the intelligence.

"What you state must, of course, be correct, Mr. Wales, and I need not say that it puts an altogether different face on the matter; I may say, an unhappy face. It makes it necessary for me to consult my client at once, as he will desire to protect his interest with his usual promptness."

Mr. Knarles rose as he spoke, and extended his hand for the paper. But the banker paid not the slightest attention to the words or the movement, and he withdrew his hand. After a moment Mr. Wales asked, sharply, "What is your price for this?"

"Our price! I must remind you, sir, that Mr. Worthington has advanced the full amount, with no deduction for interest or commissions —"

"Bah!"

Mr. Knarles was growing bold, and the banker showed his first symptom of feeling in the impatient exclamation.

"Does this constitute your entire claim against my — against the indorser?" he continued.

"It does. I am prepared to hand you Mr. Worthington's receipt to that effect."

Mr. Wales turned, and touched his bell.

"May I trouble you to unlock the door?" he asked, without looking again at the lawyer, who obeyed with a readiness that bordered on precipitation. To the clerk who answered the summons the banker said, "Bring me a blank check."

It was brought and laid before him.

"To whose order?" he asked.

"Mr. Samuel Worthington, if you please," responded the lawyer, whose face was now agitated by repressed satisfaction.

It did not please the banker, however. He frowned darkly at the name, and after a moment of hesitation filled in the check rapidly to the order of the firm, and despatched a clerk to the bank for the currency. Pending the messenger's return the silence was broken only by a single interrogation and a ready reply. Mr. Wales faced about, and, curbing the rising disgust which was evident in his face, met the eye of the Tombs satellite with a fixed look.

"I have no guaranty that this will be kept silent," he said.

"The best, sir," returned Knarles, quickly. "It is for our interest that it should be."

The banker felt something like a shudder at this significant admission. It had cost the proud old man an effort to exact it, and he was paler than before when he passed the thick roll of bills which had been brought in to the lawyer. He gave only a glance at the receipt given therefor, and turned to his desk again, while Mr. Knarles somewhat laboriously ran over the money. The few words of acknowledgment which the latter ventured to utter received no attention, and the lawyer, finding them unheeded, shrugged his thin shoulders, smiled softly to himself, and passed out. Outside, the smile spread blandly over the sharp, cunning face, and the little man bestowed a remarkably cheerful salute upon the old cashier, who looked up over his spectacles at the unwonted visitor, and won-

dered again at the hiatus occasioned in his check-book by such a customer. It deserves to be recorded that the amiable Mr. Knarles, on leaving the office of Wales, Burton, & Co., so far diverged from his usual habits of business as to drop down to Delmonico's and partake of a glass of hot brandy-and-water, for which indulgence he found a twofold excuse in his successful negotiation and the bad state of the streets.

The banker sat tapping idly on his desk for a time, — a long time for him, in those busy hours of work, — his eyes resting thoughtfully on the two slips of paper lying before him. The old cashier, who looked in for some instructions, saw something in his face which sent him away again on tiptoe. Then he gathered up the draft and receipt mechanically, and put them in a small side-drawer, the key of which he kept in his *porte-monnaie*. The absent look was still in his eyes as he closed and locked the same; they fell purposelessly upon the mass of unopened correspondence, and wandered, as by fateful chance, to a morning journal which lay partly folded on the desk. There they rested, rested long, until the old intelligence seemed to flash back into them; and with a convulsive movement he reached out and took up the paper.

It was only the "World"; but as it rested there an advertising column headed "Ocean Steamers" was conspicuously in view, and it was this heading which has caught the banker's gaze. He ran down the list rapidly until his eye paused on the name of a steamer which was to sail two days later; the old, instinctive habit brought his pencil to the place and marked it, and the paper was then carefully deposited in a pigeon-hole within reach. Then, without so much as the sigh which a younger heart heaves against its trouble, the man of business went back to his business, and the cashier, looking in again, found in the busy worker, going on with his letters, the unchanged, untiring "principal" of every day.

"When Mr. Charles comes down, tell him I wish to see him, Burns."

"Yes, sir; and the blank?"

"I will give you a memorandum later; remind me of it."

In due course Mr. Wales came across the hurried communication of President Perkins, which, after reading it, he put in his pocket. The honorable directors of the Bank of Perkinsville received, the next day, a letter from their New York correspondents containing the rather extraordinary statement that their "No. 72 Bk. Com. at sight for $10,000," handed to Mr. Charles Wales on the evening of the 17th instant, had been "accidentally destroyed." The amount, however, had been credited to their account in full and instructions noted. "Would they kindly forward duplicate draft at their earliest convenience?" The worthies of the up-country corporation wondered somewhat, but complied in all confidence, and thus the draft disappeared forever from the surface of things. The old cashier received a memorandum for his blank "stump," — a charge of $10,000 to the private account of Mr. Wales. He was also instructed to credit the balance of the Perkinsville National with a like amount, and charge the same to Profit and Loss without interest, against the arrival of their remittances, so that in the balance-sheet of Wales, Burton, & Co., that day, the house account stood debit $20,000, half of which was a knotted puzzle to all the working heads but one.

When Charley passed the great office doors, where a rabble of nervous delivery-boys crowded the passage, the cashier found time over his lightning task to deliver the senior's message. The young man's heart sank at the words; they told him that his sin had already found him out, and for an instant he could almost have turned and fled, reading his guilt in every face. But he went in, passing by his associates with eyes on the floor and pale cheeks, making no response to their friendly greetings, — a strange discourtesy in Charley Wales.

A bright-eyed clerk, running rapidly through a mass of bonds, noted it, and exchanged significant glances with his mate.

"Row on between the old un and Charley."

"I guess; they don't hit off at all lately."

What passed between father and son within the locked inner office in the next half-hour neither the curious employees nor the world ever knew. Charley came out as he had gone in, and left the place with a dazed look on his face, and no word for any one. Outside, on the street steps, he paused and bared his burning head mechanically to the cold breeze; it ached fearfully, but he was hardly conscious of the pain; and as he stood there with listless eyes wandering down the restless thoroughfare, a dreamy feeling was born of his bewilderment which was deeper than any sense of physical distress. Strangely soft and significant the familiar scene became to him at that moment, with the last rays of the early winter sunset gilding the icicles which clung to a thousand airy corners of the spire of old Trinity, and glinting down along the line of house-fronts to the bald colonnade of the Customs, and a host of memories surged up within him at the thought that it was the *last time* he should ever gaze upon it. Long ago he

had felt a child's pride in the knowledge that his father was one of those great men who kept houses down there filled with gold; he had gone down at long intervals, as he grew to boyhood, and watched with wondering eyes and beating heart the vast human machinery which worked so swiftly and so faultlessly in the big offices, investing the picture with all the boy's romance, and thrilling pleasantly at sight of the name he bore staring down at all the passers-by in great gilt letters. He had grown up ambitious to share in the labor and glory of this marvellous employment; but it had proved hard and unsatisfying all too soon, and the scene he gazed on now had long ago turned cold and colorless enough. But in this moment a rare change had fallen over it, — the melancholy interest that clothes the face of a friend going a long journey. Few men had ever thrown the same amount of sentiment into the sober lines of walk and wall in that feverish mart as did poor Charley in those few moments on the steps; but a sharp touch on the arm put it all to flight.

"Hallo, Charley! one would think you had found a new architectural study, or a bit of charming scenery in the old street, judging by your artistic *pose*. Lucky if you can; though, for that matter, a man in your shoes may build his 'castles in Spain' where he likes, fine, five-storied, substantial ones, marbled and mansarded and all that, eh? Egad! you may build yours even here, if you care to. That's one picture; but only look at mine! Woe is me! There is Erie down a half, and Brooks sending that infernal red-headed office-boy up in hot haste for 'margin.' I call him my *Spectre Rouge*, and I believe he *is* ethereal; I shied a quarto of Kent at him the other day when he popped in, and it went through him; he stood there, unwinking and unmoved, when I had thought he would go down like a ten-pin." The gossipy friend hooked arms with Charley, who walked up with him, mechanically, to the Broadway corner. "You look done up, old fellow. I saw you putting out with Dick Huntley last evening, and wondered what was on; none of my business, of course. Huntley's a good fellow, is n't he? Only wish he would let one know him better."

The name aroused Charley; he excused himself to his friend, and clambered into an omnibus. The first settled thought he had had for hours came with the mention of Huntley; it grew to be a feverish desire by the time he had reached and descended at the club. It was early, and there were only a few loungers in the parlors as he entered and sought out the steward. Simms met him with his unvarying smile.

"Not pleasant out, Mr. Wales?"

"No, it is not. I say, Simms, here is a check for a thousand, and I want you to pay off some things for me. I will give you a memorandum of them; they will foot up with what I owe you about eight hundred; you can give me the balance now."

"Certainly, sir," and the celebrated wallet made its appearance. "Going out of town, Mr. Wales?"

"No — yes — that is, for some days; have you seen Huntley to-day?"

"O, beg your pardon, sir, I had nearly forgotten it; there is a note here for you from him, I think."

Simms hurried away and returned with the missive, which Charley tore open and read with eager haste.

It was as follows: —

DEAR CHARLEY, — I have just received a telegram from Sterns at Washington; he has botched my business there, and I must go on at once, though I have a roaring headache out of our fling last night, and had hoped to recuperate here quietly to-day and measure the damages with you to-night. I can't for my life recall the events, but I find myself a penniless wretch this morning. Did I loan you anything? I hope so, I'm sure, though I am sorry we went to Worthington's. It was your suggestion, you know, and there was no holding you when you got there. *Telle est la vie!* However, it is no great affair, and we 'll be good boys and not try it again. I am awfully sorry not to see you, but can't help it. Take care of yourself, and don't go to 00th Street again. I 'll be back in three days' time, and until then believe me,

Yours,

DICK.

FIFTH AVENUE HOTEL, December 18th.

There was but one man among the host who called themselves his friends to whom Charley could have opened his heart in the strait into which he had come; that man was Huntley, and there was something more than disappointment in the deep feeling of loneliness, of utter helplessness, which weighed him down after the perusal of this untoward note. But the unselfish soul retained no bitterness for its friend. "Poor Dick! I am always dragging him into some scrape; I wonder he has not dropped me long ago; any other man would, I fancy. What a fool I was!"

He had conferred that unflattering title on himself many times during this weary day, but never with more emphasis than at this moment, when the losses, — he could not recall whether they had been large or small, — and the inconvenience to which they might subject Huntley, filled his thoughts. He stood musing by the fire until people began to straggle in and arouse

him by their salutations; then he went into the street and walked slowly towards his home. It was quite dark now, and lights were gleaming softly in the windows as he passed up the avenue; he saw the swift shadows flitting across them, and pictured to himself the happy home-circles in the warmth within. In his desolation he never paused to think that in each there brooded some heavy trouble like his own; he only saw in them the blessing of a home with a thousand sweet and sacred influences dwelling therein. They were not for him, and his steps grew slower as his young heart sank. Once he gathered a sudden resolution as the memory of the fair-faced girl of the morning flashed upon him; but the stern face of his father intercepted the sweet vision the next instant, and his shame fell on his soul like a pall. He paused irresolutely on a street corner, and was standing there when an omnibus came clattering down. Scarcely conscious of what he did, he hailed it and got in; he could go anywhere, rest anywhere, now, but in his father's house, where every object seemed endowed with a pitiless and accusing voice.

Huntley had written and despatched more than one swift epistle in the busy half-hour at the hotel previous to his departure from town; and there had gone around to Mr. Samuel Worthington in 00th Street, by the same messenger that had conveyed the note to Charley at the club, a communication of a different character. It was received and read by Mr. Worthington over a very late breakfast, a meal at which the obsequious Knarles enjoyed the unspeakable felicity of assisting, — an honor bestowed probably in recognition of his successful negotiation of the morning. Huntley briefly urged prompt action with the draft, — an entirely unnecessary proceeding as we have seen, — and closed with the words, "I am off to Philadelphia, as, whatever occurs, I am best out of the way; and in whatever *does* occur, I *must not* be involved. If anything special turns up, telegraph me at once at the Continental."

Worthington perused the paper impassively, Mr. Knarles watching him covertly over his glass. That notable attorney had acquired some bad habits in the practice of his profession, and could not wholly divest himself of them in private life; moreover, his curiosity had been sadly piqued by the events of the morning, and he thirsted for more enlightenment than he had received from the cautious gambler. It was not every day that he could bring himself into such happy relations with a great man of the street, and he was beginning shrewdly to regret his too faithful pursuance of his client's interest and too slight regard to his own. He ventured at the third glass of wine to remark innocently, "I was not aware that young Wales played; not a regular thing, is it?"

Worthington repelled the gentle advance promptly.

"We will not speak of the matter any further, if you please, Knarles," he said, coolly; "you have acquitted yourself satisfactorily, and we will not forget it; but it is desirable, for various reasons, to let the matter drop."

The lawyer smiled apologetically; but he suffered much self-condemnation on his way down town, visibly indicated by repeated sober shakings of his head, and, arrived at his office, he sat down and entered in his private books a careful minute of the transaction so far as he had figured therein, with shrewd addenda of inferences; when this was done, he indulged in a lengthy meditation, the conclusion of which was marked by a significant wrinkling of his brows and the philosophical ejaculation, "Who knows?"

CHAPTER III.

OUT OF THE WAY.

CHARLEY did not make his appearance at the breakfast-table the next morning at the Wales mansion, — a not uncommon occurrence, to be sure; but Mr. Wales noticed it, and asked Stephen if his young master was at home. The old servant made a feeble effort to evade the truth, without uttering a direct falsehood. "I don't think he is up yet, sir," he said.

It is not likely that the subterfuge deceived Mr. Wales, even partially; but he said no more, and the meal passed off in silence. There were present only the banker and the young girl of the morning, who, with the absent Charley, composed the small family of which it behooves us now briefly to sketch the history.

Mr. Edward Wales had been a hard-working man of business in Wall Street for forty years. He began as a youth of fifteen with the simple details in the office of Burton Brothers, even then a prominent house, not, as I might have noted, in the Wall Street of to-day, but farther down in the antique shades of Beaver Street, from which the modern thoroughfare of finance received its earlier settlers. Tireless and ambitious, with exceptional abilities and a routine of life rigidly shaped to the groove, even in those early days, in which it was destined ever afterwards to run, he rose and prospered in his place, until in time he assumed, without question, the foremost position among the working heads of the house. At twenty-five he was the brain of the concern. The principals were old men, driven

each day more imperatively to seek the repose which age demands, and which it will not be denied; but they clung with the selfishness and the pitiful tenacity of their years to the traditions of their trade, and when the issue could no longer be avoided, they bought over the name and body of their lieutenant, as for ten years they had paid the hire of his faculties. He married the only daughter of the elder Burton, and became the junior member of the house on his wedding day. The old association of name and line was thus insured, and the corporations of Burton Brothers & Co., and Mr. and Mrs. Edward Wales, were simultaneously recognized by an admiring public. Business principles had been rigidly adhered to, merit and ability rewarded, and the sensitive requirements of old age fulfilled; and if sentiment had no share in the transaction, the absence of it had in no way marred the harmony of the event. The man-world looked on in sober approval, and applauded the successful clerk; and the woman-world smiled upon and envied the established mistress of the fine new dwelling on Union Square. The years rolled on, marked by the birth of our hero and the decease at brief intervals of the two worn seniors. By special provisions of a joint will, the old name was to figure still over the door in Wall Street, to remind the world a little longer of men the world would rapidly forget; and some well-established charities, seldom heard of but through similar channels, received into their secretive maws portions of the Burton gold. Not notably large, however, were those portions; these twin workers understood too well the business impropriety of withdrawing active capital, and the great bulk of their wealth fell to Edward Wales, "our dearly beloved son and nephew," with conditional legacies to his wife and son.

Five years after his marriage the banker's wife suddenly sickened and died. Their association had been utterly colorless and uneventful, perfect in every domestic detail, brightened by little or no sentiment perhaps, but clouded with no mistakes. If he had never loved his wife, as many good people imagine it right and necessary to human happiness to do, he had at least heartily respected and admired her as the embodiment of womanly propriety, the sober, frugal mate, in whose noiseless revolutions there was never an eccentricity or an error. Her loss in those days was a terrible blow to Edward Wales, the man of thirty with the heart of fifty. It was the first, absolutely the first, cross which had marked that continuous story of success; his life and his soul rebelled against it, as he stood over the dead woman in her coffin; but he could only bow in a dumb, uncomprehending way to the one Power he felt himself unable to oppose, and go back in silence to his post.

He possessed a single relative of his own family, a widowed sister, who lived with her children upon the Hudson, and her he besought to give a home to his son. They were far removed in character, this brother and sister. People who had known both marvelled at the relationship, ignoring what was, perhaps, pure cause and effect in nature, — they were the offspring of different mothers. She granted his petition gladly and thankfully, though not without conditions almost sternly insisted upon. One of these was that the boy should remain under her care and government till he reached manhood. Her woman's shrewdness had measured long ago the character of her brother, and she knew how unfit he was to guide and mould a young and enthusiastic intelligence. She saw something like the hand of a generous Providence in the event which gave the boy to her to guard and foster. She saw also the shadows that lurked in far-away years along the path he must follow. She was a good woman, a woman of strength and tenderness; one of those noble yet silent natures whose influence sweetens life, and makes our earth something more than a clod.

To her requirements Edward Wales without great deliberation consented. It was practically a surrender of his child; but he could not but feel his helplessness, his inability to undertake himself the task of education; which feeling, be it said, was not unmixed with a certain unwillingness to make the sacrifice of his time and attention that the responsibility would involve.

The compact was sealed, and the bewildered little waif went away to his new home. The great town house was not closed; Mr. Wales preferred to remain therein and live as nearly in the old way as possible.

Little Charley's life reopened in the loveliest corner of the world, where the blue Hudson rolls smoothly to the sea, and the fringed Highlands, full of mystic shades and elfin-haunted gorges, rise on either hand. Amid these glorious scenes the boy, it might be said, was born again; his infant sorrow quickly faded from his mind, and with it all the chilly memories of the gloomy town house and the tuneless life therein. In the new atmosphere the natural impulses of his being warmed into new life and grew with his growth; he went back to Nature Nature's child, and drew strength and gladness from her glad presence.

Those years of Charley's life were beautiful, bountiful years. He grew up amid the truest and tenderest of home influences, and from a wise guidance and careful combination of task and play derived a store of

mental wealth, gathering fruits of knowledge in paths of roses. His aunt, Mrs. Howland, lived near one of the busy towns of the lower river, upon a charming estate where she had known the great happiness of her married life and the immeasurable after-sorrow of her widowhood. Her own children, a boy and a girl, the former older and the latter by several years younger than Charley, and our hero, comprised her little family, in which the noble woman, sealing her life sorrow in her heart, found her consolation and reward. I need not dwell on these years, or follow minutely the golden threads of the young lives which were knit together in that time in unalterable affection; nor do I need to venture far on the ever-debatable ground of education.

Mr. Wales was an infrequent but a regular visitor at the river home, coming at certain intervals on a Saturday and remaining over the Sabbath. There would be a general attendance at the church in the morning on these occasions, and long afternoon rambles by the river, during which Charley would recount the events of the month to his father, and respond to the latter's brief and rather absent catechising as to his progress in knowledge. If sometimes a child's inspiration, a dim yearning for some trifling tribute of a father's affection, stirred the boy's heart, it perished in the atmosphere of this cold man, in whose soul there seemed no corner left unoccupied, no guarded space which the busy revolution of gold-gathering schemes had spared to the ordinary affections of nature.

Fourteen years of Charley's life passed away unmarked by any notable event. There had been small troubles, and sicknesses, and accidents; but even in these ills the happy home was signally favored. Once, indeed, little Emma fell from a corner of the boat-house into the river below. Charley, then ten years old, — not large of his age or physically strong, but of heroic stuff, — dashed in headlong to save his cousin, without wasting breath to call for help. It was in the spring-time, the ordinarily placid river was swollen by freshets, and both the children would inevitably have been drowned, if Stephen, the house-servant, had not seen the accident and called assistance. To offset this claim upon his aunt's speechless gratitude, his cousin Fred pulled him out of a vent-hole in the ice the winter following, at the imminent risk of his own life. If there had needed anything to cement more closely the bonds of affection which already bound this happy home-community together, these events completed the work. From the day of the adventure on the frozen stream to a later and more terrible one, when Frederick Howland breathed out his life in Charley's arms in an army hospital, the love he bore his boyhood's friend was more than that of a brother, and something like that of a woman.

The lapse of these fourteen years brought the long charge of his aunt to a close. Fred was going to college, and it was the desire of Mr. Wales that Charley should accompany his cousin; but the longing for a business career had grown with him and taken a strong hold of his heart, and he pleaded hard to be allowed to go into the office. It was to his aunt that he turned, and the good woman listened with an anxious heart. She fully understood how mistaken, almost fantastical, was the ideal which he had conceived; but she was as fully alive to the impolicy of sending him to college. To tell the truth, the young man had grown rather beyond her cast. The boy so gently and easily guided and controlled had become the youth who must control himself; and Charley's was a nature of which, while she admired and revered it, she knew the weaknesses and faults. But she accepted the mission to his father, and said to Mr. Wales: "You must not send Charley to college; it will not do. I send Fred, but he is of another sort. I can trust my son without a thought; but I should fear for Charley, even under Fred's protection. No! it will not answer, brother; and besides, the boy's heart is set, as you know, on another course."

"Yes, I am aware of his desire. I need scarcely tell you I consider it a mistake. He is not qualified for active business, and it is not required that he should be; the necessity of labor does not exist for him, and probably never will; and though I can't say that I regard it as fortunate, I accept it as a fact. The question is — "

Mrs. Howland interrupted him: "You must not make an error there, Edward; the necessity of occupation *does* exist and is paramount for Charley; without it every day of his life will be full of danger. In a word, there is nothing to do but to take him into the office, but it must be done carefully and intelligently. He will be disappointed, I know, and for this you must make generous allowance and compensation. Give him a post of some importance and responsibility. Make him conscious of its value and its opportunities, and bear with his earlier shortcomings. It must be done carefully, very carefully, brother, and with patience; for his future welfare hangs on these few coming years."

Mr. Wales accepted the situation in the end, but with a certain inward impatience. There was a discordant character about it which grated on his peculiar notions. It would be an innovation on the old, unbroken, and unvarying rule of his office, and that the party in whose favor the exception was

made was his son weighed but little against his repugnance to the irregularity. Charley recked not of this, however, in the delight with which he entered into the world of his dreams, and began the soulless lesson. I have intimated that his business career was not a success, and I shall not attempt a discussion of causes; it will be readily divined that the awakening to the hard realities of the new life, the utter ruin and desolation of his old poetical structure, and the mixture of humiliation and disgust, followed swiftly in his case; but he held on bravely for a time, battling with the discouragements that confronted him and stifling the protest of his soul.

Mrs. Howland's health suddenly failed, and in the following winter she came, in pursuance of advice, to live in town. Mr. Wales had previously left the house on the Square, where the innovation of glittering signs and public tumults warned the quiet dwellers beyond its limits, and taken up his residence in one of a block of palaces on the Avenue, where his sister came, at his request, and established herself with her daughter. It was a brief period of comfort for them all during the winter. Mrs. Howland rallied from her weakness, and Charley found a priceless boon in the renewal of the old, sweet association. Emma Howland was blooming into beautiful womanhood, with a rich inheritance of her mother's lovely and noble nature; and even the banker relaxed in a measure from his frozen preoccupation in the changed atmosphere of his home, and was conscious of a certain dim suspicion at times that his life had been barren of much that was good and seemly.

The spring that succeeded was that memorable one in which war woke from its sleep of fifty years, and walked forth in our land. Fred Howland was at Harvard, and from its patriotic shades, in those days of blazing enthusiasm, he was among the first to go to the field. He fell at Big Bethel by the side of Theodore Winthrop, and died in Charley's arms a few days later at Fortress Monroe. The blow killed his mother; not all at once, but it checked the improvement of her health, and with the autumn flowers she passed away. The blank that fell upon the young lives of Charley and his cousin, through her loss, cannot be expressed in words. More than the young man realized, perhaps, was it a loss to him at the time when he was beginning to drift away from his uncongenial task to wayward paths, impelled, rather than checked, by the cold displeasure of his father, to drift as he would never have done had the soft hand and mother-voice of old been there to restrain him.

The few years which preceded the opening of this history were uneventful, yet still memorable, because in them his distaste for business and proneness to unlawful distractions grew too strong for control. His father gave him no moral help; he had never cared for and scarcely understood the thousand nameless attractions in life which divide the thoughts and labor of most men; he noticed only their influence in extreme cases, and condemned them unexamined in the mass. For his son he had as little charity, if not less, than he would have had for the most alien of his employees. But where he would have crushed the wrong tendency in the one, he met the other with a silent resentment infinitely harder to endure; and when, in time, he hurled the punishment on his son, it was without a warning word. Charley had looked forward to his admission into the house as a partner, on his coming of age, as a matter of course, and the expectation had helped to restrain him in the weary struggle. When the anniversary arrived, however, and was let pass without a movement in the direction of his advancement, he threw off the last bond of his allegiance, and in his bitter humiliation abandoned the hope of any possible future success in the office. He turned more fully from that day into those attractive ways wherein the men of his age find solace and entertainment in the days of their youth, and, if less recklessly than most, with still as little ambition for anything better or dread of anything worse. He did not positively go down upon the black books of the world as one of the undefined fraternity of "fast young men"; society dealt leniently with the great banker's son, and would still have smiled sweetly and sought its mildest expression to the end for him, had his name been a synonyme of vice; but there remained for him a better influence, far stronger and dearer than even he dreamed, which was ever a living shield between him and the grossest evil. The lessons of a childhood such as his had been, the daily contact with natures as delicate and pure as his own, had wrought a bright and unfading strand in his character, which would strengthen the weaker man, and which, if it could not prevent his stumbling, would help him in the effort to rise.

At the breakfast-table that morning no further mention was made of the missing Charley, but his father wrote a brief note, before leaving for the office, to be handed to his son when he should come down. As the banker withdrew, his eye met the anxious glance of his niece, and he paused an instant in evident hesitation; then he passed out quickly, covering his departure by some last injunction to the servant.

Charley came in later in the morning, and met his cousin on his way up stairs. She seemed to have been watching for him, but

he only addressed her with his ordinary salute, and went hurriedly to his room. Here he read the communication from his father. "I must remind you," it said, "that you have but twenty-four hours to make your final preparations in. I will attend to everything down town, so that it will not be necessary for you to revisit the office, and I will see you when you go. I have said nothing of the matter to your cousin, and would recommend you to leave all explanation to me."

He sat some time ruminating over the lines. He looked as if he had not slept, and seemed to have been drinking, — drinking as a man sometimes does in the vain effort to drown his thoughts. Something like defiance had flashed into his face at the first reading of the note, but it died away again into a gloomy shadow, which grew infinitely sad as his heavy eyes wandered over his pretty room, so full of the happy souvenirs of his young life. From the walls pictured faces looked down upon him, — that of his aunt, with her grave, sweet smile, faced the strange and severe visage of his forgotten mother, copied by his own hand from the great, staring portrait of twenty years before, which hung down stairs; and side by side, in the sunlight, his two cousins — the brave boy sleeping at Old Point Comfort, and the fair-faced girl he had passed on the stair — gazed at him with loving eyes. He looked long at the last; it also was the work of his hand, and one upon which he had spent all his skill. He remembered well the burst of applause which had greeted its first exhibition, long before, to the circle at the country home; and while he studied its girlish features — the pretty, unfilled shadow of the beautiful woman-face of to-day — the crushed paper dropped from his hand, and two big tears, which would no longer be repressed, rolled down his cheeks. Then he aroused himself with a start: "Heigho! What should such fellows as I do? I wonder if Prince Hamlet would have gambled and *stolen?*" — the word came hard — "perhaps, if he had been Charley Wales." And if Horatio had been Dick Huntley! He went to work then sharply. He would not have Stephen in to ask questions or worry his old head; so he dragged out a large trunk from the closet and threw it open, disclosing a choice assortment of fishing-togs which had done service the summer previous at Minot's Ledge. Then he gathered some armfuls of effects from the vast repository of his wardrobe, and, tossing them on the floor, stood thereafter in the midst of them, an amusing picture of helplessness, despite his sad face. Afterwards he did better. What did it matter, indeed? A few things carelessly and hurriedly put in; some little treasures, less carelessly selected, from the store of souvenirs on his table; a book or two, some photographs, and a packet of letters, — and the task was done. He closed and locked the trunk, and tossed the remaining things ignominiously back into the closet just as Stephen summoned him to luncheon. As he entered the dining-room, struggling hard to look unconcerned, his cousin met him with a troubled face, and, drawing near, laid her hand softly on his shoulder. "Charley, what *is* the matter? I know something has happened between you and your father."

"We have not quarrelled, Em, if that's what you mean," he said with a smile.

She looked fixedly at him, without seeming to notice the words, and his gaze avoided hers uneasily. "You are going away," she said.

Charley looked alarmed. "No! — that is — what made you think that?"

"I hear you packing in your room."

He was at a loss, and stood silent some moments, digging his boot in the thick carpet with eyes downcast. Then he looked up sadly, but spoke with quiet resolution: "You are right, Em, something has happened, but I can't tell you what; at least not just now. Don't ask me, please."

She grew paler, and her hand trembled slightly, but she kept it on his shoulder. "Then you *are* going away?"

"Yes, I am — not far — that is, not for long, I hope. Shall you care much?" The words were uttered thoughtlessly, and he looked in her eyes as he spoke. They fell a moment, but met his own again full and warm in the next.

"You know I shall care, Charley. What should I do without you? And then to have you go away on bad terms with uncle!"

"No worse than usual," he broke in, bitterly. The brief flash of feeling had died as it came.

"I wish we could all be happier here," she said with a sigh. "Don't you think you could be if you tried? — with your father, I mean."

He turned away to the table at the words. "I would not make the effort, even if he gave me the chance, which isn't likely; it isn't worth talking about. Let's eat our lunch and be jolly."

It was not jolly, however, despite his well-sustained efforts to make it so. His cousin was thoughtful and troubled throughout, and at the conclusion stopped him quickly, when he made a strategical effort to leave the room. "When do you go?" she asked.

"To-morrow, or next day. Why, how worried you look because I can't tell you all about it! Don't you see, it may be one of those terrible business affairs, — crisis at the Bank of Something, — delinquent cash-

ier, and I a special emissary to protect the gigantic interests of Wales, Burton, & Co., bound in the nature of business to conduct my operations with the tremendous mystery appropriate to the case. You poor puss, don't bother your brain about it! I will see you again, — must go down town now. *Au revoir!*" And he got away, leaving her no whit relieved.

She went to her own room with an anxious and sinking heart, and sat awhile in troubled thought; then she yielded to the temptation of her fears, and stole up to Charley's room only to find the door locked and the key gone, — a state of things without precedent, and which sent her back to her chamber more alarmed than before. At last she rang for Stephen. The good old man had been her mother's servant, and had watched and loved the cousins from their earliest years. He looked distressed as he came in.

"Did you want me, Miss Emmie?"

"Yes, I wished to ask you — Stephen, I'm afraid something very serious has occurred between Mr. Charles and his father."

Stephen shuffled uneasily before the inquiring gaze of his young mistress. He possessed an endless sympathy for her, but he was discretion itself, and he had conceived, moreover, a wholesome respect for the senior Wales, which, in these later years, had in no small measure subdued the once lively tendencies of his tongue. "I hope not, Miss Emmie," he said, — "I hope not. You know they have some little difference atween 'em, but that will all come right in time. Mr. Charles is very young, you see, Miss Emmie. Why, it seems on'y yesterday — "

"Yes, I know, Stephen, but I think there is something — something dreadful now. Charley is going away."

"Bless you, Miss Emmie, you don't mean it!"

"Yes; he has been packing all the morning."

"I am 'stonished to hear you. Packing? Why, Mr. Charles never packed his own trunk in his life!" And Stephen's incredulity got the better of his anxiety for the moment.

"But he did to-day, and he told me he was going away. Don't you know anything about it, Stephen? Don't you know what was in the note his father left for him this morning?"

He looked at her reproachfully. "Bless you, Miss Emmie, how should I? I will tell you," he added, after a sober pause, "all I saw, though I ought n't, because it was not for me to see. After I gave Mr. Charles the note this morning, I thought he might want some breakfast, so I went up again, and knocked at his door. I knocked three times, Miss Emmie, and got no answer; then, thinks I, perhaps he is ill or needs something, so I made bold to open the door. There I saw him sittin', very solemn-like, on a chair, Miss Emmie," continued the old man, and his voice grew tremulous in the recital, "with the paper in his hand; but he was n't a readin' of it, he was looking up at the picture of poor Mr. Frederick on the wall, absent-like, and the tears was runnin' down his cheeks. I shut the door, then, very soft, and came away. I would n't 'a' told this to any one but you, Miss Emmie."

He drew his sleeve across his eyes as he concluded, but Emma did not see it. It was growing dark in the room, but had the old man's eyes been less dim he might have seen by the firelight her own tears falling thick and fast. There was silence after this, until he said with an effort, "Thank you; that is all, Stephen."

As the door closed on the servant her head sank wearily forward into her hands, and the great dread at her heart welled up in unrestrained and almost convulsive weeping. The scene so simply pictured by Stephen confirmed her fears; what it was she knew not, but that something had occurred to rob her not very happy home of its single bright presence was no longer to be doubted. She made an effort and went down when the dinner-bell rang. Charley had not come home, and Mr. Wales sat in his place more silent and stern than she had ever seen him. She burned to ask him for some explanation, but his face forbade her, and she excused herself, in sheer inability to bear up longer in his presence, and hurried from the untasted meal to her own room. Here she kept watch with her tears, struggling with the terror and faintness of her heart, and longing, O so bitterly! for that mother's help and the dead brother's hand in this hour of peril. Far into the night she sat thus, and then lay sleepless, still straining her ears painfully for the familiar step which did not come. She went down to breakfast with almost a fever in her brain. Mr. Wales looked disturbed, — angry, she thought, — but nothing could prevent her speaking now, and she asked, desperately, "O uncle! do tell me what is the trouble with Charley. Why is he going away? Where is he going?"

The banker looked at her not unkindly, almost pitifully.

"I will tell you to-night, Emma. You must not be distressed; we will do all for the best."

She had to be content with this, for she felt the utter hopelessness of demanding more. The banker going out to his carriage carried with him the picture of the pale, strained face, so like the Ellen Wales of

long ago, and said to himself as he rolled away, "Thank God, *she* died before this came!"

O the man of gold with the unseeing heart! If *she* had lived, this never would have come.

The day went on; Charley did not come to the house, but late in the morning a baggage-express called for his trunk, and the man had the key of his room. Emma was wild with terror; he was going without seeing her, going she knew not where. She met the man in the hall, trembling with fear and excitement.

"Did Mr. Wales — the young Mr. Wales — send you for his trunk?" she demanded.

"Yes, ma'am."

"And gave you this key?"

"He left the key at our office, ma'am."

"When?"

"Yesterday."

"Yesterday! then he — Where do you take the trunk?"

Either the man had been warned or chance favored the mystery.

"I take to the office, ma'am; the different lots is made up there, you see, for the boats and trains."

"And you cannot tell — you don't know where he — where it is going?"

"It would be hard to do that; only a guess, there 's so many trains, you know, ma'am."

She had strength for no more questions, and abandoned the inquiry, going back to her room in dumb despair. By her fireside she was sitting, worn and wretched, as the sun went down; by his fireside also, in the Continental Hotel at Philadelphia, sat Mr. Richard Huntley, smoking tranquilly and framing bright visions of his future among the glowing coals. Held carelessly in his hand was a telegram received and read some moments before: —

"C. W. sailed for Europe to-day in *Scotia*.
"SAM."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUCCESSFUL MAN.

MR. HUNTLEY returned to New York from the antique shades of the City of Brotherly Love in a thoughtful but altogether satisfied state of mind; he had said aloud, on reading the despatch from Worthington, "*Cà va bien!*" Which is terse, abbreviated, and idiomatic French, covering in this instance a world of meaning, adequately to set forth which requires some space in explanation.

Mr. Huntley was one of those well-known men of whom we know nothing, who flourish so extensively on our generous American soil. Such are not uncommonly of foreign extraction, and it was said that he was an Englishman; but I, who enjoyed a nodding acquaintance with him in those days, do not remember that any one ever vouched for the fact. He had come into the street, as so many come, from unknown parts, and figured for some years as a small and careful operator with considerable shrewdness and a supposititious capital. People began to notice him after a time, and quote his reserved opinions, and the thousand-tongued rumor of the walk ultimately associated him with certain great clique-leaders; when the Sternson "corner" in Cape Mail occurred, when, indeed, as is written in the archives of William Street, they sold the stock over the counter for cash like so many Poor Man's Plasters at the fixed price of three hundred and fifty dollars a share, the whole street waiting in line for it at that or any cost, it got noised about that Dick Huntley was "long" of it to the very handsome figure of a thousand shares, and he was a made man from that day in the estimation of all the wise men from Trinity to Tontine. Whatever his success may have been, however, he did not fall into the common but grievous error of flashing it in the eyes of a less fortunate world; he remained the quiet, rather attractive man you were always glad to encounter, but from whom you parted with a vague consciousness of having stumbled on a sealed book; and he was the same well-met man to all, without making any man his friend. Even when he began to show at the club, he brought his atmosphere with him, bearing himself courteously to all, but still keeping something apart; and if he was not especially liked, he was cordially respected, and rather famed withal, as a good specimen of "the rising man."

In due course he established himself in Broad Street, and sent his modest card around. The new concern of Huntley & Co. surprised no one, but responded rather to general expectation, and met with knowing suggestions of "silent partners," "very strong," and with universal approval and fair augury. He got a good line of business too, for it was known that he held his own well in the Open Board, and it was believed also that he had dropped personal speculation, though there were no visible guaranties for that opinion; and the fond public, or that portion of it which constitutes the contributive body to Wall Street, is prone to accept many comforting but delusive statements of that nature. It was not long before Huntley managed to figure in more colossal transactions, and claim the recognition of the crowd as an agent of the cliques; and he performed a real masterpiece of strategy in the Board one day, "bulling" a weak stock successfully against a strong combination, that was the talk of the street for weeks.

In a word, he was a success. In the few years he had lived in the financial mart he studied silently the field, and, entering it afterwards as an active man, he pushed his way rapidly to the front, with a subtle mastery of all the details of business, and a clear insight into its mysteries which nothing escaped. It needed only that he should secure a footing within the select circle of the great houses, and obtain the protection and indorsement of some one among them; once established in that coign of vantage, his course was clear and the end assured. It will be imagined that he soon found means to accomplish that object, and the *modus* will bear description.

The young house of Huntley & Co. could not claim to be a heavy lender of money, but it was known to carry handsome balances at times, and was quite high on the lists of the borrowers. One afternoon they had an application for fifty thousand dollars from a small neighbor. Huntley was in the office at the time, and, though fully aware of his inability to accommodate them at the moment, he did not omit to examine the collaterals. Something about them fastened his attention; he was a very clever judge of securities, and he made careful notes before handing them back to the bearer.

"Sorry I can't serve you," he said, "but we have drawn lower than I supposed; try Brooks, or, still better, perhaps, Wales, Burton."

The clerk hurried away. Huntley sent a boy to watch him, made some pencil notes from memory, and awaited the return of his spy, who came back directly.

"Well?" he asked.

"Made his loan at Wales, Burton, sir."

The broker called in at the great house at an early hour the following morning and requested a private audience of Mr. Wales, who received him politely; he was not unknown to the banker, but he was on the latter's list of "new men," — a class he dealt with cautiously.

"I will not apologize for taking your time, Mr. Wales," he said, "the matter is one of confidence, and I come in the protection of mutual interests. I recommended a party to your house for money, last night, — Stevens and Leonard. Do you happen to know if you loaned them anything?"

"We did."

"Fifty thousand, was it not, on a thousand Erie?"

"I think so. I will inquire —"

"Will you also allow me to see the collaterals?"

"Certainly."

The securities were brought, and, drawing a memorandum from his pocket, Huntley compared some numbers and further examined the certificates; ten of Erie Railway common stock of one hundred shares each. It was a rapid, though thorough, inspection, at the conclusion of which he exclaimed, "I was afraid of it! they are altered certificates, Mr. Wales!"

"Is it possible?"

"I am sorry to say it is undoubted. I regret to have been the cause, perhaps, of your taking them in; but I was on the point of advancing the loan myself, when my cashier informed me we could not do it. I had already taken the numbers in pencil at the moment. By the merest accident, having some Erie transfers to make this morning, I noticed the rather uncommon entry of ten shares in one-share lots upon the book. The name struck me at once. I asked to see the 'stumps' and compared these numbers, which I fortunately had about me. They are the same certificates, sir, altered to a hundred shares each!"

Of course, Wales, Burton, & Co. lost no time in securing themselves, which they were barely in time to do, by attaching the bank account of the eccentric gentlemen, Messrs. Stevens and Leonard; and of course, Mr. Huntley secured the most valuable patrons he could have had, perhaps, in the street, and with them the position to which he aspired. He was, henceforth, a frequent and cordially received visitor at their office; and the moral effect — the moral effects of Wall Street are peculiar — of his *coup* was to give him the confidence of men, and procure for him an increase of business and opportunities.

Charley Wales thus came to see more of the man with whom he had previously enjoyed a speaking acquaintance at the club, and who had always possessed a certain attraction for him, — as he did, indeed, for every one.

Charley sought and cultivated a more intimate intercourse, which we were all surprised to see freely accorded; and it was said at the Mayflower that Dick Huntley had at last found his "man Friday." It was less difficult to explain the intimacy on the young man's side, for there could hardly have been a character more attractive to him than that of this passed man of the world, who carried under his calm exterior the rich and varied experience of his class, and who, when he chose to put away the sober daydress of his life, as he sometimes did for Charley, showed beneath the real warmth and passion of his nature. To Charley he opened the closed pages of a singularly eventful career; not all of them, indeed, nor any that were too darkly shaded, but very many of that tenor which fascinates an impressible nature like that of his young friend. Nothing could have equalled the charm which the latter found in the fabric of reminiscences dealing with other lands

and the great and small people thereof, and checkered with the adventures of a clever but rather reckless young man to whom Continental life was a solved problem at an age when most men are entering upon its investigation. From these detached bits of his history Charley gathered in time what formed a half-connected train of events.

Huntley was a younger son of a good family — as Charley suspected, a titled one — in England, and had gone out to India with his regiment at an early age, to hold his own as best he might in that hotbed of nature and social life. The traditions of a tempestuous youth were not ignored in the colonial world, Charley judged, but on this period of his life Huntley touched very lightly. He came back after some years to England, — a circumstance which seemed to have received no attention at the War Office, — and subsequently went on the Continent as an *attaché*, where he floated from embassy to embassy for more than ten years; and it was this interval which furnished the sparkling souvenirs which were Charley's delight. Of the circumstances which led to his emigration to America, Huntley never spoke, and Charley did not seek to know; the barrier of reserve peculiar to the man was never entirely removed, even for him.

The intimacy was naturally the subject of considerable, and not always very charitable, remark among the rather outspoken members of the Mayflower club for a time; but I am certain that when Huntley began to come more among us with Charley, and, relaxing from his former reticence, showed us at times something of the unsuspected man within, there was not one of the observant company who failed to feel the rare charm of his presence, or wondered longer at Charley's preference. Old Byrnes would have his growl. It had been his privilege to know Aaron Burr, and to him he was fain to liken Dick Huntley in manner and appearance; but he, too, would look up from the columns of his paper and listen as attentively as the rest of us when the broker had the floor.

Huntley was an occasional guest at the Wales mansion. Charley had met with an unusually gracious response when he first proposed his friend's company at his father's table, and his boyish ambition to exhibit the prodigy to his cousin led to many subsequent visits. There were very many pleasant evenings indeed in the grand parlors, where the handsome and fascinating broker came soon enough to be the centre of attraction for all eyes and ears. He went very little into society, and seldom except with Charley, but he met everywhere with the same smiling reception; questions of antecedents were forgotten in the great fact that he was a brilliant and rising man; and the patronage of the Wales family was itself a guaranty which silenced any captious inquiries. At the social events at the Wales mansion he was soon an unfailing light; he grew, in fact, to be their crowning feature in the feminine esteem; and if any delicate argument sometimes arose in some fair bosom as to the propriety of attending the "Wales party" or the "Wales *musicale*" because Mr. Charles Wales had been neglectful in his calls or Miss Howland and her friend and chaperone, Mrs. White Jennings, similarly remiss in their conventional duties, it was more than answered in the reflection that "Mr. Huntley was sure to be there!"

And so, in truth, he was, and his faithful presence at the banker's house ultimately gave rise to certain pleasant conjectures in which Mr. Charles ceased to figure as the explaining cause; very many good people foresaw at once a happy alliance for the broker, which was quite in pursuance of their previous prognostications respecting Mr. Huntley's future, and on the 'Change of gossip the matter speedily became an accepted fact. That the possibility had dawned on his own mind at an early day is also true; he never lost sight of the utmost reach of his opportunities, or failed to weigh them promptly and thoroughly; and the advantages offered to him at Charley's home were carefully considered by him from the first. He did not immediately determine upon action, for there existed some formidable objections to marriage in his case; but the project grew upon him insensibly, even while he reasoned with himself on its impracticability, until he had half mechanically entered upon its execution. It is possible that he would still and indefinitely have pursued that course in the half-consenting and half-resisting spirit in which men's dispositions beguile their judgments, but that a sudden rude shock aroused him to a perception of an unsuspected obstacle, put an altogether new face on the situation, and left him the choice of withdrawal or of entering formally into what promised to be a difficult campaign. The obstacle was, in truth, a tremendous one. To say that his reception at the banker's had been warm and encouraging scarcely expresses the unreserved friendliness which Mr. Wales manifested for the successful man of the street, and the equally unquestioning regard shown by Miss Howland for her cousin's friend; there had never been any abatement of either, and he was able to measure with satisfaction the evident pleasure derived from his company by all alike, and especially, perhaps, by the young woman, to whom, as to Charley, the man was a revelation; it was only when he ventured, with delicate *empressement*, a nearer

approach to her, that he met with a very perceptible element of repulsion. Too wary to commit an indiscretion, he did not immediately repeat the experiment; but a subsequent moment of encouragement having offered itself, he made a second advance, and was received with a cold surprise which completely baffled him, while it stung him into consciousness. He awoke sharply to the knowledge of an unseen lion in the path; but once awakened, it needed no long time for the clear eye to penetrate the shadow to the fact, and to reduce that as well to its exact proportions.

Emma Howland loved her cousin, — the laughing, careless boy, whose fondness for her, if it had possibly a deeper root, had never taken, he was sure, the form and semblance of love. The discovery was not a flattering one to Huntley, who held no small opinion of his own merits and capabilities with the sex; but he did not allow the feeling to blind him to the strength and endurance of the woman's affection, which, as he very correctly estimated, was the growth of years of intimate association, and a sentiment closely intwined with her whole life.

The revelation brought on a crisis in Huntley's life. His first confused resolve was to leave the field, to leave Charley to the ultimate and inevitable enjoyment of the rare love and the rare woman who waited only to be asked, and to whom, as he could so clearly foresee, the unthinking boy of to-day would turn some other day in a sudden awakening of his own man's heart. This first true impulse was only natural on Huntley's part, for he had liked Charley, liked him for himself, and made him as much his friend as it was possible for the man to make any one; but in the tumult of thought and feeling which followed it, the boy was but a straw tossed in the passionate flood of the elder's soul.

Why give it up? Why give *her* up?

Ay! HER!

Huntley stopped short in a mad promenade of his own chamber, and faced his reflection in the mirror. It was not an uncommon thing for him to do; and as for that, he might search far and long to find the equal of the splendid face with its deep black eyes and wonderful power of expression which looked out at him at that moment, — looked out with a strange light upon it, and a curve in the lips which was half smile, half sarcasm. Many a time had he thus faced the man in the glass, and held excited debate with the emotionless shadow. It nerved and cooled him to do so; and in more than one dark passage of his life it had been a singularly strengthening thought to him that, come what might, the creature before him would be the same magnificent work of nature still.

"Is it you, Dick Huntley?" asked the shade, with the curve deepening about the mouth, — "really you, and after all these years and all your lessons? Just now, too, when you have your future in your hands, and a weakness would be fatal. Pshaw! what is it? A pretty girl's heart, a brief tale of legendary 'bliss.' You ought to know what that is worth, and what it sometimes costs!"

The face was a sneering devil's now. He did not like it, and resumed his walk without calling up his visionary guest again.

The struggle was a fierce one, but it was brief, as with him any struggle must be. He ended it by tossing his cigar in the grate and tossing himself upon a lounge with a ringing laugh. "Egad! there 'll be merriment in hell to-night! And now, *travaillons!*"

The good woman who had the honor to be Mr. Huntley's landlady, and who was at that moment an affrighted listener at his keyhole, did not possess, fortunately, a knowledge of the Continental languages; had she done so, she would have been inexpressibly shocked by the nature as well as the expression of these last words, and have seen in the smiling gentleman who came out some moments later, and passed her with a bow in the hall, nothing less than Mephistopheles "warm from his bed"; and she would not have been far wrong, figuratively speaking.

Huntley's intercourse with the family at the house on the avenue went on as before; he had experienced one nervous tremor in approaching Miss Howland again, but her manner indicated no recollection of the circumstance we have noted, and the broker was careful to avoid the dangerous ground whereon he had slipped. As for Emma, she led herself easily to believe that she had erred in being startled at all, and even chided herself for the momentary emotion she had felt. There had been a vague shadow which rose when Huntley came again, but this faded before his guarded manner, and under the conviction that she had misjudged him, she labored to efface the effect, if there might be any, by increased kindness towards him. Huntley read the simple girl-heart as he would have read an opened book, and shaped his course thereby. He shut up his secret in his soul, and gave no sign; but he went out to his work with watchful eyes, and with every faculty of his being centred on the attainment of his hopes. The situation was difficult. There could be no progress for him so long as Charley remained on the scene, and everything hung on the removal or the destruction of the obstacle. No

wonder that Mr. Huntley wrinkled his fine brows of nights over the problem, or that in his vexed heart the friendship for his young friend curdled quickly into bitter hate. Who stood in this man's way was his enemy, and towards none had he ever known a deeper resentment than against the warm-hearted boy who had been the chosen intimate of yesterday. Intimate he still remained, and in the manner of the elder no shade of change was allowed to appear; but he schemed and waited, trusting in his old, confident way to chance.

We have seen how chance, true to the interests of this man-waif, who was its devotee, came in an hour and solved the enigma for him. Huntley had not been able to find an answer to the question which was ever in his thoughts after the night at Worthington's, as to what would be the result of the affair. His hopes covered a variety of sequences, all having a general conclusion, and pointing to a more or less complete estrangement between father and son, and partial or permanent banishment of the latter from the office in Wall Street, and from New York. He hoped it, without daring to expect it, and pictured to himself a possible exile to some Western city as the likeliest result. More than this he had scarcely anticipated, and it may be imagined with what exultation he read the telegram, and broke the silence of his room with the ringing words, "*Ça va bien!*"

It had indeed "gone well," better by some thousand miles of sea than he had ventured in his wildest thought to hope. It was all he asked. The boy was far removed now; his be the task to keep him away.

He called in at the banker's on his arrival, and was received somewhat nervously by the latter. "I have been over to Philadelphia, Mr. Wales," he said, in ordinary business tone, "and I find, as I expected, that there is no life in that quicksilver affair; nothing doing or likely to be done in it, and I think Simpson must have been misinformed."

"Ah! — yes, probably," responded the banker, rather absently. He was busy with some papers, and did not look up at the speaker.

Huntley experienced a little uncomfortable thrill. "All well, I trust, Mr. Wales, at your house, — Miss Howland and Charley, — I missed him outside." He watched the banker like a hawk, and saw him recover himself sharply at the name, and pause before speaking.

"You will be surprised to learn that my son has gone away."

"Gone away! I beg your pardon —"

Huntley was the picture of amazement and concern, as the banker turned in his chair, and added, "He sailed for England yesterday. The event is one which involves some painful explanations, and I beg you will allow me to make them at some future time."

Huntley bowed in silence.

"As you circulate somewhat among his acquaintance," continued Mr. Wales, in some embarrassment, and fumbling with a check-cutter, "I had thought of asking you, Mr. Huntley, as my son's friend, to confer a favor on us. His abrupt departure will occasion some remark, perhaps; will it not be as well to attribute it to ill-health? In fact, it is but a tardy pursuance of the course advised by Dr. Martin after Charley's illness in the spring, and which his own disinclination alone prevented his following at the time."

"I shall be glad to do as you desire, Mr. Wales. I need not say that I am shocked by the event; but I trust we shall have him back again, bright and hearty, before many months." He watched closely for the effect of these words, and experienced a secret delight in noting that the banker affected not to hear them, and turned again to his desk. "May I inquire his address, Mr. Wales?" he asked, rising.

"Letters in Tompkins's care at Paris will reach him for the present."

Huntley returned his thanks, and went to his own office in a happy state of mind concealed under a troubled exterior. One important point which had caused him some lingering anxiety was settled, — his own connection with the affair at the gaming-house was unknown to Mr. Wales; and an important probability was also certified, — there was no prospect of an early return of the exile.

He made his appearance at the Mayflower in the evening with a serious face, and to the questions with which he was besieged — for Charley's sudden voyage was already generally known — he replied, gravely and sadly, "Doctor's orders. I had not suspected it myself, but it seems he was ordered abroad in the spring, and would not go. I am awfully sorry, but I suppose it was the best thing to do."

A general expression of regret and good wishes followed the intelligence, while Huntley withdrew to a corner and read the brief and rather incoherent note of farewell which Charley had left for him with Simms. That ever-smiling functionary, who had, however, toned down his face into something akin to sadness suited to the occasion, stood discreetly aloof while the broker perused the missive, after which he apologized for the liberty, but begged to state that Mr. Wales had left a fund in his hands to liquidate his obligations to different gentlemen

at the club. Would Mr. Huntley kindly name the amount due him?

Huntley said "Never mind," rather impatiently, and called for paper and ink. In the hour that followed he wrote busily, and finished two letters. The first was a long one to Charley, opening with the expression of a great deal of regret and some self-accusation; "though if you had told me," it said, "that you had that infernal check about you, you should never have gone to Worthington's with me or with my consent. It was only after reading your lines here at the club to-night that I was able to seize the clew to the mystery of your sudden departure. My God! what a mistake and what consequences!" But following this he brought out the brighter side with rare cheerfulness. "I will be watchful for you here, and if anything can be done at any time to arrange matters, you may be sure I will do it if it is in my power. I can't bear to think of your being sent away like that for a slip any man might make in such a moment; but it is not for me to judge, of course. At any rate, my dear boy, a little time smoothes over these things wonderfully. You will think I speak by the card, and perhaps I do; and I tell you emphatically I shall have no patience with you if you continue to harp on the fancied 'disgrace' of your little mistake. If we were all to be hung for an equal guiltiness, Charley, there would be no one left for the rope-puller. Keep good heart, and enjoy life as it comes to you over there. We shall have it all right again for you here before you are half through with Europe. By Jove! if it were not for the manner of your going, I should say you were deuced lucky in getting away for a foreign holiday just now, when the office had grown so tame for you!" And thereafter succeeded some useful and pleasant hints respecting the "doing" of London and Paris, into which the writer infused so much of his old charm of style, that Charley, devouring the letter a fortnight later, in the warm light of an English coffee-room, finished it with a sigh, and thought what a clever, good fellow Dick Huntley was. The letter further said, "I shall see your cousin often, as you request, — as often, at least, as seems agreeable to her. She will miss you terribly, but woman-like, you know, devises some consolation with the assistance of her friend, Miss Clare. Your exodus is attributed to ill-health; you know there was something said of your going out in the spring, and there is no whisper of anything else. I will take care to check *that*, if the necessity arises, and I will shut up Robbie if he is disposed to talk. In all possible things where I can be of service, don't fail to command me, and above all write me often. I shall wish to know it all, you know, and if you neglect me in this I shall conclude that my *fidus Achates* is a spurious article. Don't think, my dear fellow, from all this lightly written gossip, that I have lost sight for a moment of the inevitable bitterness of the affair for you. I only wish to have you make the best of it, and help you to do so if I can. I enclose you an introductory line to an old Paris friend of mine. You will find him clever and good to know, and he has the *Grande Ville* by heart; in fact, when I think twice of it, I would say *don't fail* to look him up. He will be an invaluable acquaintance, and one after your heart."

Huntley's second missive was also Paris-bound, and bore the address of Monsieur Edouard Somers, Poste de la Madeline. It was somewhat carefully and laboriously written, and concluded in these words: "Above all, he *must not* come home. Keep him there at all hazards, and by any means you like. It is worth more money to me than you would believe, and will be worth something to you; *çà va sans dire*. Note my suggestions, but take your own course; *lier* is the word! tie him up, and draw on me, if you require any funds, through Tompkins, though, as I have said, he must have a liberal credit, and can be made to pay the bills easily enough. Finally, write me regularly, and keep me informed of his movements."

It was also to M. Edouard Somers that Charley's letter of introduction was addressed.

CHAPTER V.

BENT TO THE TASK.

HUNTLEY allowed some days to pass before he called at the house on the avenue. When, at length, he did so, he was met at the door by Stephen, who presented the excuses of his young mistress; she was ill, and kept her room. Would he see Mr. Wales?

"No, not to-night."

He pencilled four words of sympathy on his card and went away; she received and noted it with indifference, but recovered herself, momentarily, afterwards, and called the servant back to say that when Mr. Huntley came again she would see him.

Very wretched and miserable had these days been to her, — sunless, hopeless days, that make one grow old and press out the freshness of young hearts with their weight. There had come to her on the day following Charley's departure, by some unknown messenger, a brief, spotted scrawl in her cousin's hand. It had been his latest act before going on the steamer to write it; he had dreaded to do it, and neglected it persistently

until that last moment, when he had reached a wild and almost chaotic state of mind, and was half unconscious of what he wrote. It was a confused, almost unmeaning, jumble of words, and might be cruel levity or the bitter outpourings of a despairing heart. "I suppose I am neither worse nor better than most men," he wrote; "I only know I am not very happy, and do not expect to be again. I know not where I shall go, or what I shall do; what will it matter? I shall adopt the true maxim of the outlaw, and waste no love on a loveless world."

Twenty other equally reckless words, redeemed by a little burst of affection for herself at the end, and that was all; it confirmed her fears, and she had gone in an agony of terror and bewilderment to her uncle, and demanded to know the whole truth.

With all the gentleness of which he was capable, Mr. Wales received her. He forbore to reveal Charley's disgrace to her, setting forth a rather plausible story about the necessity of change for the young man, dwelling lightly on his later and mistaken course, and more forcibly on the benefit of removal from damaging associations. The sweet, tearful face touched a hidden cord, perhaps, for he kissed her almost tenderly when she left him, and said in conclusion, "It is all for the best, my dear, and you must not grieve for him. The change was an absolute necessity, and no doubt he will find great enjoyment in new scenes, as well as the benefits I hope for, and come back — come back some day, I trust, sobered and improved."

And he did trust so. If there had been any momentary compunction following the resolve which he had so suddenly taken on the morning of Mr. Knarles's visit, when his wandering eye caught the steamer list in the paper, it was rapidly appeased by his many secret arguments, — arguments so numerous and reasonable in his own esteem that he very soon came to regard the scheme as a particularly happy conception. He saw his son on board the vessel, and bade him farewell solemnly, with much serious advice. He made liberal provision for him abroad, and left the limit of his absence to be fixed by himself beyond a term which he considered it advisable to exact. He believed he had acted with good judgment and with no little charity, and enjoyed intense self-satisfaction in consequence. Had he been conscientious or even capable in an analysis of the feeling, he would have found it to be really more a sense of relief to himself than a sentiment of especial regard for his son.

It might still be urged that the course was a wise one, — possibly, as a tardy remedy for the neglected ill.

Emma Howland accepted the fiat of her uncle in dumb consciousness of the futility of appeal. She fled from his presence, and, alone with her misery, sought to find consolation in hope; but it was a weary and pitiful effort. These later years had been a sad sequel to her happy childhood at the river-side home. The double loss of mother and brother had overwhelmed her with its crushing weight; and from this she had rallied, painfully clinging with desperation to the sole remnant of the dear old life now left to her, — the affection of her cousin. And this, in its kind, was unfailing. It was not a sentiment of words, but an invisible element of their every-day life, and, though unexpressed, no less a strong, enduring bond. They had grown up together in an unbroken home intimacy; there was not an event of her life with which he was not associated, and it had never entered her thoughts that their future lives could be separated. The child's affection had ripened with her years into something stronger and deeper, but the feeling had slept in the happy fulness of the present. If there had been moments when some secret voice spoke to the patient heart, moments which bred a nameless craving that stirred the hidden depths of her being, she had hushed the one and given the other no heed, living content in her daily food. So had she passed the age when most women in our tropic society are married and given in marriage without a wish or a thought of aught beyond their portions, and in that she was happy. Charley was never changed or careless, or less than he had ever been to her. Probably in all their lives he had never in word or deed so bruised her heart as he had done by those unhappy farewell lines, and the cruel stroke awoke her fully to the true nature of her feelings. There was no resentment or any lesser emotion in her soul, however; all, everything, was swallowed up in the single crushing thought of her loss. She had never dreamed of that possibility. Moments of trouble and little fleeting pangs of heart she had sometimes had, though to be jealous, as we use the word, was not in her nature; but these had faded as they came.

She summoned her forces in vain to meet the blow; it was blank, bitter despair, without a ray of light, and it crushed and conquered her. She felt that she did not know all, that there was still a mystery hidden beneath Charley's hurried lines and her uncle's guarded words, but she cared to know no more. What did it matter what he had done? What *could* he do, her darling! that the world would not smile upon, and any but that cold, hard father down stairs forgive with gladness? For an instant the spirit of her mother glowed in the wretched girl as the thought swept through her mind; then she drooped again,

and the shadow came back. "Gone! gone! her loved one, her life!"

A ringing voice in the hall and a patter of excited feet on the stairs aroused her later on the evening of Huntley's call. She looked up with a faint effort to smile as the door flew open and a young girl bounced into the room, — a tall, dark girl, with great flashing eyes, and cheeks crimson under the united influence of cold air and generous blood. She afforded a striking contrast to the wan, pale-faced woman by the fire, as she tossed what would have been called by courtesy a hat at a distant chair, throwing a tiny seal-skin jacket after it, and sprang to embrace her friend. That ceremony was performed and thrice repeated in silence.

Emma's head sunk upon the shoulder of her friend, and a shiver of pent-up feeling convulsed her for an instant.

"You poor darling!" broke out the newcomer in half-tender, half-scolding tones; "you promised me, only last night, that you would be good and cheer up, and this is the way you do it!"

"O Clare! I *do* try, but —"

"O yes, I know. I knew how it would be. I'm not much disappointed, only I wish you would cry; those dry, woebegone eyes will keep me awake all night! Of course I knew, dear," continued the young woman, who had thought it proper again to repeat the process of embracing at this juncture, after which she pulled up a low chair, and, sitting down therein, pushed out two dainty, long-heeled slippers into absurd proximity to the glowing grate, "and I ran away as soon as ever I could. That stupid Windham came in just after dinner, and I had to freeze him off again before I could get away; and just as I was running out for my things along came somebody else, and I had to hide behind a door in the back parlor until Lou got him into a corner, when I slipped out. Don't know who it was, and don't care. How awfully cold it was in the street! Boo!" And the feet went up still nearer the fire with a convulsive jerk.

Emma caught sight then of the slippers. "O Clare! why did you come out in your slippers? You will get a cold, and all through your goodness for me."

"Bother the slippers! — pretty, though, are n't they? I am just trying to think how to scold you, but I can't conjure up all the severe things I want to say. I won't have you going on like this, though, because Charley has gone away for a holiday in Europe. If it was n't that you feel so badly about it, I should be glad of it for his sake. It 's a sight better for him than that horrid old office. I wish I — I wish we were both with him. I am teasing mamma every minute to go, and she says maybe we shall in the spring, and of course we 'll take you. I should like to see anything prevent *that!*"

She looked quite savage as she said it, and pulled her feet away rather hurriedly; there was getting to be a decided odor of burnt leather in the room. "Bless me! I have burned my feet off making that speech; spoiled the slippers, I' m afraid. Now, what do you think I did?" she continued in the same rapid tone, turning excitedly towards Emma, and ignoring the catastrophe of the slippers.

"I 'm sure I don't know, you child. Don't put your feet so near the fire," responded Emma, smiling, despite herself, at the impulsive girl.

"I 'll tell you what I did. When I came in, I just marched straight into your uncle's study, where he was reading a paper or something, as solemn as an owl, and says I, 'Excuse me, Mr. Wales, but I forgot to ask you yesterday for Charley's address abroad.'"

Emma looked up suddenly, and the narrator paused with much gravity to note the effect of her words.

"Yes, I did; and he looked at me in the funniest way; but I smiled my sweetest, and he smiled in spite of himself, and O my darling!" concluded the ecstatic Clare, tumbling down on her knees again, and half smothering Emma, who was listening in breathless suspense, "he told me!"

There followed an interval of silence, during which Miss Jennings bestowed a great number of kisses on the cheeks of her friend, interspersing them with low and incoherent sounds resembling the cooing of doves.

Emma at length found an opportunity to speak: "And the address, dear?"

"Oh! — care 'Hopkins' or 'Popkins,' or something; what does it matter? I 've asked him once, and will ask him a dozen times now, if necessary. Is n't it glorious, though? And to think you did n't dare! — you poor, foolish dear! We will write him a long letter to-morrow. I shall come over early, and we will scold him well, the wretch! for going away like that. Then we will make it up nicely at the end. Fancy Charley in Paris; I wonder what he does with himself!"

The momentous nature of this reflection caused her to pause the fraction of a second in serious thought; but she broke out immediately after it with a fresh inspiration.

"I 'll tell you what he shall do for *us;* he shall just make clever little sketches of things and send them by every steamer. Won't it be nice? And then — why! we should find out all the newest things in dress that way. Mr. Huntley says 'Punch's' pictures are the English fashion-plates, and nobody ever drew for 'Punch' as Charley

Wales draws. Just fancy *his* fashion-pictures taken on the spot, you know, on the Boulevard What-you-call-it!"

Emma laughed again at the irrepressible girl, and in some measure even shared her elation; indeed, the knowledge of the address had sent a thrill to her heart. She had not yet been able to summon the courage to ask for, and Mr. Wales had neglected to offer, it; and she found a new strength growing in her heart as she listened to her enthusiastic friend.

It was late in the evening, long after the girls' exuberant fancy had spent its ecstasy, as they sat with locked arms before the flickering fire, when Clare sprang up with an exclamation, and precipitately sought the hat and jacket. "Gracious, goodness me! how I am staying! I have n't been a Job's comforter, at any rate, have I? Now you will go to bed and sleep, can't you, darling? If you don't, *I* shall not, you know." She was struggling wildly with the tiny seal-skin, but paused and took breath to add, "I will stay, dear, if you want me. You could send Stephen —"

"No, it is n't necessary, you dear, good-hearted child; but you must put on these rubbers, and Stephen will see you across."

"My poor, pretty slippers! they are just ruined. There! you 'll never see your rubbers again, I guess. Good night, you naughty, darling girl!"

There was a rapturous exchange of embraces, and Miss Clare turned to go. At the table she stopped to pick up Huntley's card, lying thereon.

"O, *he* has been here, and you did n't see him! I wonder if —"

What the young woman wondered is lost to history, as she failed to complete the sentence, and, bouncing off, rattled down stairs to where Stephen stood ready to escort her to her home across the way. He got a cheery "good night" for his pains; and as he came in again and closed up for the night he said to himself, "It 's a blessed thing for Miss Emmie to have a friend like Miss Clare to chirk her up a bit these days."

They were in truth old friends, these two girls so unlike and so equally lovely in their characters. The Jenningses were a family of the great upper world, and possessed a splendid country property upon the river, which had immediately adjoined that of Mrs. Howland. Early acquaintance had led to friendship and much intimacy between the families during the long summer holidays, and especially between Clare and Emma, who were nearly of the same age. The events of later years had served to make their relations even more intimate. Clare had wept her heart out at Fred Howland's death; she could never choose clearly between him and Charley, and had made desperate love to both ever since the era of short dresses; but when "Aunt Ellen," as she had always called Mrs. Howland, was taken, her grief was something like Emma's own, and had revealed to the latter an unsuspected depth of feeling.

Mrs. Jennings made a *protégé* of the motherless girl from that time. She was very kind and sympathetic, and, indeed, loved Emma as a daughter; but she was, as I have said, a woman of the grand world, and believed implicitly in worldly curatives for worldly ills. She was a brilliant, clever woman, and a power in the circle in which she moved, but, what was admirable and perhaps rare, a power for good. The mass of women are moulded by society, while a few mould society to their will. Mrs. Jennings had found it possible to be a star in the social world and to fulfil her duties as wife and mother; to "queen it," in simple words, and remain a good woman; and few do as much.

She carried Emma away to the sea-shore that sad summer, and was very tender and careful with the bruised heart, while she drew the line sharply where a natural sorrow becomes a consuming melancholy, and fought the weakness of Emma's too plastic nature bending to earth under its weight of trouble. In time, by argument and entreaty, she won her victory, and ushered Emma into her own golden realm, and the appreciative girl found there much consolation and some happiness.

Emma rallied bravely on the new hope awakened by Clare's giddy but thoroughly good and loving fancies, and, after the child had gone, busied herself in her room with more spirit than she had known for days, piled coals on her fire, and, drawing her writing-table near it, sat down and wrote far into the night, — wrote a letter of warm, unquestioning affection to her truant boy. After that she slept a deep, restful sleep; but she was down betimes in the morning, looking quite like herself, and gave the letter to Stephen to mail with a smile that gladdened the old man's heart. "Mail it at once, please, and find out when it will go," she said; and the servant, having caught the superscription, shuffled off nimbly enough to do her bidding. He did it faithfully too, and it was with silent amusement that Emma received the impetuous Clare at a later hour, and proceeded with her to the joint construction of that wonderful letter of reprimand, instructions, and commissions, smoothed down "at the end" with a great deal of love and good wishes; her own was, meantime, being hurried aboard the steamer, and would be miles on its way before the sun went down. But the occupation was a pleasant one, and made the day a happy contrast for Emma to those of the preced-

ing week. Clare was ecstatic; her ideas poured out in a flood upon her paper, which was written and crossed, and rewritten diagonally, while Emma barely finished her sheet in single lines between her fits of laughter at the irresistible and not unfrequently preposterous inspirations of her friend. Then it was insisted that Emma should read her missive aloud, after which, and not without some difficulty, Clare read her own, — a happy circumstance, since it led to a salutary system of corrections and the supplying of innumerable omissions, in the absence of which the epistle would have puzzled a more adroit hand at manuscript than Charley Wales. The affair was finally achieved with great *éclat*, and Clare was in a fever of childish delight when the neat packet was duly sealed and addressed in Emma's clear hand ready for the post. She made a little face at the thought of the "awfully" long time it would require to bring a response, wondered that Emma should remember the address, which she had quite forgotten, and went home congratulating herself with unselfish happiness on having brought back the smiles to the poor, dear thing's pale face. And she *had* done well, the big-hearted girl, better even than she dreamed.

When Mr. Huntley called some evenings later, he found Miss Howland "at home," and was met by her with a face and manner that filled him with uneasy surprise. He found no external evidence of the shock and grief he believed she had sustained; she spoke with regret of her cousin's absence, but did not dwell on it, and the fine edifice of delicate sympathy he had reared for the occasion fell to the ground and left the clever worlding at an actual loss for words. He made a brief call, and emerged into the street oppressed with a sense of discomfiture. I am sorry to add that he came afterwards to the club and astonished Simms by making a rude demand for "the money Wales owed him," and surprised us all by a display of temper over our really unexceptionable whiskey and the club attendance. We wondered at the unusual exhibition on the part of the impassive man, and Tommy West gave utterance to the opinion that he was the "wrong way all up his back," as the door closed on him.

He took his way later to the abode and place of business of Mr. Worthington, where, in fact, he had been a rather frequent visitor since the occasion which introduced him to the reader. That he was not in an agreeable state of mind as he moved up the street might have been inferred from the rapid and nervous manner of his walk and the savage whirl of his cane; a stray dog sneaking inoffensively along the house-wall came in for a blow from that weapon, and an equally stray policeman on the corner, who favored the gentleman with a curious glance, little dreamed of the latter's very strong inclination to serve him in the same way. He did not enter the parlors at Worthington's, or go to the dining-hall; but left a message for the master with an attendant, and proceeded up stairs to a private sitting-room with the readiness of one familiar with the way. Here he ordered a hot punch, lighted a cigar, and, throwing himself into an easy-chair before the fire, brooded gloomily.

It was some time before Worthington entered the room, which he did at last with a feeble attempt at his usual gracious smile; evidently he was not enchanted with the visit.

"Ah! you, is it, Dick, making yourself comfortable as usual? Quite right, old fellow; always do it when you can, you know," he said, carelessly, coming to the fire and planting himself before it with a glance down at Huntley.

The broker neither moved nor responded, but brooded still with his head on his breast and his eyes on the coals. Worthington watched him an instant longer, and then, shrugging his shoulders, gathered a coat-tail over each arm, spread himself luxuriously before the fire, and awaited events.

Huntley spoke finally in a desperate, decisive way: "I must have more money, Sam."

The gambler frowned heavily, but did not turn. He took a cigar out of his mouth delicately, and, biting the end off with his sharp, white teeth, blew it into space; this pantomime concluded, he smoked silently.

Huntley broke out again: "That infernal short venture in Old Southern is getting me in a corner. Somebody must have crammed Jenkins, or else he lied deliberately about the stock, for it has crawled up steadily ever since I sold it, and from what I hear to-day it is likely to be bulled five or even ten per cent higher. I can't cover; it would ruin me unless I could go long of the stock to balance, and I have n't the money to do it."

There was no response yet from the man before the fire. Huntley looked up and continued: "It is a pretty sure thing, this rise; the Druid clique are in it, I know, and if I had the means I would take one or two thousand shares to-morrow. A check for thirty or forty thousand would do it, as money loans free on the stock, — another good sign. Why not make a joint operation?"

"I can't do it, Huntley," answered the other, at last, with marked impatience; "I am in down there now a deuced sight deeper than I wish I was, and I have to thank you for the most of it. I have n't a spare dollar outside of my need now, and what I let you

have last week has really inconvenienced me."

Huntley looked up angrily. "By ——! Worthington, it 's too bad to try to put that off on me. I 'll take your gains any full night down stairs and chance it to get out of my scrape on them!"

"My 'gains down stairs' are none of your affairs, Dick," responded Worthington, dryly.

Huntley looked at him in mingled surprise and rage; but the fine face of the gambler was unruffled.

"Now see here!" cried the broker, passionately, "I won't stand that! I put an easy ten thousand in your hands a week ago —"

"And have taken it nearly all out again since. I will give you the rest to be quits, if you will stow that business forever; it was dirty, and I don't like it!"

Huntley was silenced for some moments by these words, but recovered his *sangfroid* rapidly.

"This won't do, Sam," he resumed quietly; "we can't afford to quarrel, and we ought to know how to give and take by this time, fellow-countrymen in a strange land as we are, — *n'est ce pas?*"

There was an imperceptible twitch in Worthington's face at the last words, and he did not meet the eye of the other, who looked at him with something of an ironical smile.

"You will never lose anything by me, Sam; don't let that worry you. And as for your having any conscience about that matter of young Wales, it 's simply absurd. Why! it was the biggest piece of double luck imaginable; you got your money, and I got the young brute out of my way!"

"Is it a fact, then, that you are going to try the game in that quarter?"

Huntley's heart revolted despite himself at the quick question; but he showed no sign, and met Worthington's eye steadily as he answered, "And why not?"

"Why not, to be sure; only, I should think —"

"Well, what should you think?"

The words were almost fiercely put, and the gambler laughed with well-assumed gayety.

"By Jove! I don't know what to think sometimes, Dick; it 's a rum world to live in! But I must go down. I am really not in funds, but I can let you have some securities."

"What are they?"

"The old lot, five-twenties."

Huntley made a grimace. "O, the registered ones?"

"Yes, the same," laughed Worthington. "Look out where you borrow on them. I would n't recommend old Wales; he can't be very fond of my name on paper! I 'll send them down in the morning, — ta, ta!" And he went out.

Huntley remained some time in his luxurious solitude, silent and thoughtful.

"I wonder what made the man show ugly," he said to himself. "He ought to know better, and, by ——, he shall be taught, if he tries it again!" He aroused himself at this juncture, looked at his watch, and, whistling at its disclosure, betook himself homeward.

The bonds came down promptly in the morning, and the amount raised on them enabled Huntley not only to weather the shoals, but to follow as well his scheme of "hedging," whereby he came out of the affair with a handsome balance. It was with no little satisfaction that he returned the securities to their owner a week later, with his compliments and regrets. "What a pity you would not come in on the Old Southern!" he wrote; "a clear rise of five per cent in two days." On reading which Mr. Worthington shrugged his shoulders, as was his wont, and remarked that "the fellow always fell on his feet."

The broker was therefore in a genial humor when, some evenings after his visit at the Wales mansion, he called across the way on his charming acquaintance, Miss Clare Jennings. That young lady was in quite a flutter over her visitor, for the handsome Englishman had an ardent admirer in Miss Clare, and she had on divers occasions deployed all her forces against him with an exasperating uncertainty of success. She received him, accordingly, with much grace, but scolded him coquettishly for his neglect in calling. Huntley thought what a splendid creature she was, looking at her as she sat before him toying with a shadowy bit of handkerchief, and casting arch glances at him. How much easier to be had than that other one! A card to play, perhaps, if the other failed. "I owe you infinite apology, Miss Jennings; it is we who suffer, however, compelled as we are to deny ourselves the pleasure of your society. You know how it is —"

"O yes, I know; please don't vex my ears with the thrice-told tale. 'Business,' of course, always 'business'!"

"Quite right; stupid, is n't it, that no one invents a new plea? I have tried. It has cost me nights of sleepless study, it has indeed, Miss Jennings, in the vain hope of winning the gratitude of my fellow-sinners."

"And of course you did not succeed. I shall suspect you, however, hereafter. It is horrid, though, that you men cannot content yourselves with all day in Wall Street, but must have a 'Board, or whatever you call it, at the hotels in the evening. I would turn you all out in the street, if *I* were the Fifth Avenue Hotel!"

Huntley laughed gayly at the idea. "So

you would, and be a benefactress to us all. You see, if some go, all must follow; and so we of the mass are dragged in by the incorrigibles."

"Yes, I see; you all distrust each other, and fear to lose an advantage by being absent. You poor souls!"

The reasoning of Miss Clare was irresistible. Huntley laughed and surrendered.

"I cry you mercy, Miss Jennings, as one of the convicted. Behold me at your feet. And the gay world? Following its course, I presume, as merrily as marriage-bells. I have been such a recluse for a month past, that I feel like a monument of antiquity."

"O, the same old thing!" said the young woman, with a pensive sigh. "I am quite worn out with it, I assure you, and every fresh card of invitation gives me a shudder. It is n't satisfying, Mr. Huntley."

She had seen two winters in society, poor thing! Mr. Huntley looked comically grave. "No more it is, Miss Jennings," — he was not quite sure of her meaning, but he was immensely sympathetic, — "no more it is; the more we see of it, the less satisfaction it affords us. It is almost sad sometimes, is it not? 'If this be all, and naught beyond!' Ah, well! we must go on with the world, of course; but as for me, I have no heart to go about since our Charley ran away so unceremoniously."

"Was n't it a shame? I was so surprised and grieved! And to think he was ill all that time and no one knew it. Of course, he would n't speak of it."

"I had no suspicion of it; indeed, I can scarcely believe it now; but doctors know best, and must be obeyed. He must be sadly missed over the way."

"You can't think how much. That poor, dear Em! She was inconsolable, and just as miserable as she could be."

"I can well imagine it." He spoke with sweet sadness, and Miss Clare darted a soft glance at him.

"Ah, Mr. Huntley, it was beautiful, *that* attachment!"

The gentleman moved nervously, but looked volumes of sympathy.

"The poor thing was so wretched," continued Clare, "that I was heartbroken about her."

"But I found her quite cheerful, and evidently much consoled, when I called on Wednesday," said Huntley, with an expectant heart. "So much so, that I confess I was surprised."

Clare looked at him triumphantly. "That was *me*, Mr. Huntley. *I* did that."

"I can understand what measureless comfort she would gather from your sweet sympathy, Miss Jennings."

"Ah, yes; but you don't know how I revived her spirits, and by such a simple thing. I can't conceive what made Charley act so strangely about going; why, do you know, he never saw Em before he went, or even let her know where he was going!"

She wrinkled her pretty brow a moment over the problem, and Huntley said, "No doubt the poor boy was awfully cut up. I inferred as much from his farewell note to me. I was unluckily out of town when he left."

"How astonished you must have been!"

"I was, indeed, — more than astonished. But you have not told me by what magical process you consoled Miss Howland."

"O, just the simplest thing! She did n't even know Charley's address, and had not the courage to ask Mr. Wales for it, and she was breaking her heart about it. So I just marched into his sanctum, and demanded it on the spot."

"And got it, of course," cried her listener, with well-assumed admiration. He was gnawing his lip the while, and cursing this new chance. "Who could refuse you, if you came thus?"

"Of course I got it; and we wrote such a nice long letter to the dear fellow. Em became positively happy over it, and has been so ever since; though I suppose it will be an age before an answer can come."

"It is vexatious, is n't it?"

It was vexatious, very vexatious, to him; and after the *tête-à-tête* had dragged through another half-hour, in which he lost much ground in the good graces of Miss Clare by his excessive dulness, he took his departure in great annoyance, and was even less amiable at the club afterwards than he had been on a previous evening. But the man had ere this fully measured and accepted his task. He made a secret no longer, to the nightly guest in the mirror, of the passion that was growing in his heart, roused by the opposition of circumstance and nourished now by ever-present dreams. He gave himself over to it, heart and soul, and shaped his course to the fierce resolution of winning by fair means or foul. Plots and counterplots circled in his brain, keeping him for days in a mad whirl of passionate thoughts, and almost unfitting him for his business. To these there succeeded the clear outlines of well-defined schemes, rigid lines of conduct to be followed, and the moves of the game to be studied and sure. The creature who had been a wild and reckless adventurer for the better half of his life, governed by the caprice of the hour, tossed by his passions, and led by chance, became, with this last touch of nature, the master of himself, the instrument of a sentiment stronger than himself. Would he win the game, this clever, undaunted player, schooled of the world, — this bold,

strong, far-sighted, silent genius of self, without conscience, without principle, and without fear?

A hundred to one against the field!

Weeks and months went by, and men saw a marked change in the broker. In the street they called it improvement; and an improvement was certainly visible in his affairs there, as his bankers could testify. At the club it was said, inelegantly, that the man was "soured"; but as he came more and more rarely and stayed briefly, it was a short-lived topic. Probably the elegant Worthington was more perplexed by the change than any other observer; it began by interesting, and ended by alarming him.

"I can't think what is on with the man," said that worthy to himself, after a settlement of accounts in which Huntley cleared off his entire obligation to the gambler; "evidently training for something, and wants to shake his old friends." And the gentleman, whose soliloquies were largely tinctured with sporting terms, looked troubled. He went so far as to send certain speculative orders to be executed by Huntley & Co.; and though the broker smiled wickedly at the messenger, he did not refuse to accept his new customer.

"Nervous, is Sammy!" said he to himself.

"Glad he took 'em," thought Worthington.

Huntley called regularly, but not with marked frequency, at the house on the avenue. He displayed rather less of his former volatile brilliancy in conversation, and Miss Clare, who happened in occasionally during his calls, thought he was becoming decidedly stupid and *blasé;* but Emma found his quiet and wonderfully sympathetic manner very agreeable. He moved cautiously and by inches, but he worked well, and made progress; for, from being kind to him for her cousin's sake, who had asked it in his last lines to her, Emma came in time to take a growing pleasure in the broker's society for itself; and in the studied attitude he assumed toward her there was a rare attraction she could not but feel, that no woman could fail to feel, who sees before her a man of superior years, of a rich and checkered experience, and an extensive knowledge of the world that speaks in trifles but is constantly discerned, — a man we call "accomplished" and believe to be wise; whom we admire and wonder at, and who flatters us insensibly but deeply by a subtle, studied deference. Desdemona would always love her heroic wonder, Miranda her beautiful stranger from the unknown world; and though the heart of Emma Howland was guarded with a love too strong to be overcome, she was not proof against the strong though unsuspected influence of this skilled reader of hearts. In her he had no common character to deal with. He had learned that quickly, and, fortified in the knowledge, his advances were made with all the skill and caution of a master tactician.

Meantime letters had come in tedious course from Charley. He had received that written by Emma and the famous joint production we have described, which were forwarded to him in London from Paris. He wrote briefly but cheerfully. He was well, and gathering rare enjoyment in his new atmosphere. When he should be settled at Paris, the orders of the ladies would be attended to, but he had found London so attractive that he could set no time for his departure. He wrote a half-tender apology to Emma for the manner of his leaving: he was so miserable that he was scarcely conscious at that time what he did; "would she forgive him, and believe him always her loving and affectionate Charley?" And Emma kissed the sheet, and slept with it under her pillow. She wrote him again, tenderly and tearfully, and waited long for a reply.

CHAPTER VI.

ASHORE ON ÆÆA.

THE June roses were blooming in the parterres of the Imperial Terrace when Charley Wales arrived at last at Paris. He had lingered long in London, making some pleasant acquaintance, and held by the magic attraction of the grim monster mother of cities, which, for his untravelled fancy, possessed a fascinating and romantic charm. His intermediate bit of sea life prepared him admirably for the enjoyment of new scenes, — those twelve wild and exciting days on the winter Atlantic, with just enough congenial society below decks to dissipate the gloomy thoughts that might have come in with the starless nights and the grand old waste that warred with the winds incessantly before his eyes. It was a period of regeneration for the young man, smoothing down the angry and troubled feelings which had marked the first hours of his expatriation, and leaving him with a sober consciousness of his position; somewhat saddened at times by the error that had marred his life, but more and more resolved to turn the lesson to good account, to reap some pleasure from his present, and qualify himself for a better future. There was a sort of mental arrest in this abrupt change from his free and careless existence ashore, with the warm relief of a luxurious home and countless friends, to the solemn

loneliness of the ocean and the singularly inspiring atmosphere which envelopes all who follow their precarious course thereon. For the first time a realizing sense of his manhood thrilled him, and his past life seemed to roll away like a pleasant but idle dream. Most young men of easy lives experience some such awakening moment, I fancy, when the old paths lose all at once their charm, and are abandoned with relief, if not in disgust. His earlier days in England — beginning with one of familiar snow-storm, through which he dashed down from Liverpool to London at forty miles an hour, stopping for cakes and ale at a no less significant place than Tom Brown's Rugby, and running into the vast o'erlapping wilderness of the great city just as the millions of lights were beginning to twinkle in the brown December mist — were one continued dream made up of a thousand book-memories, and fascinating beyond expression. He exulted in the recognition through all the evening gloom of Fleet Street, and the worn arch of Temple Bar, under which he drove to his hotel in the city; and he boasts, to this day, of having strolled the length of Cheapside, gazed down from London Bridge upon the inky Thames below, and up at ghostly St. Paul's from the churchyard, before he slept that wonderful first night in London. And this half-boyish enthusiasm, which covered no small measure of solid appreciation, made the long after-task of "doing" the city one of constant delight. The American feels in the English metropolis a kind of consanguinity with men and things superior to all prejudice. He feels at home, and, indeed, he is at home with his forgotten ancestors. There is not a structure from the rookeries of Seven Dials to the broad front of Somerset House in which we do not feel some peculiar interest; not a thoroughfare or a byway, from Oxford Street to the Tower, whose name fails to strike some answering chord of memory. We are conscious of a sentiment of proprietorship which enables us to walk loftily in the antique streets, and disposes us to resent the rather cold glances of our old-country cousins who mark us for "foreigners."

Charley read off the pages of the great historic book with eager and appreciative eyes, beginning with the antique black-letter of the remote past, and plodding through the whole pretty thoroughly, down to the modern character of his time. It seemed to him like a pause of time, that breathless moment when he stood in the dim shadows of Westminster, with the sealed dust of kings below his feet, and the dazzling constellation of names of the Immortal Corner before his eyes, — Chaucer and Spenser, Milton and Dryden, Shakespeare, Addison, Gray. Nor was it less stirring to puzzle over their own written text in the treasure-house of the Museum; crabbed, angular lines which tell us something of how they labored to give their deathless inspirations to the world. The kings were the better writers, poor souls! Perhaps there be stools for book-keepers where they are gone!

The young enthusiast knew no rest until he had fairly exhausted the mine and become something of an antiquarian himself. Abbey and Tower and Minster were severally and repeatedly gone over, and it was not until he had accomplished the whole circle, from the very crypt where Kit Wren sleeps in the vault of his making to the outermost wall of Hampton, that Charley thought of using his letters and coming back to the men and things of his century. It was a sad descent from the classic Briton to the cockney; but the latter as a *genus* deserved a study, so our hero began a new round in the old paths, and feasted Bacchus over the reverend dust. He achieved his potato heroically at Evans's, and allowed himself to be tossed in the hot tempest of the Alhambra afterwards. He ate a fish dinner at Billingsgate, and fought desperately for cheese *with* his pie at Simpson's. He went down and dined at the Garter too, at Richmond, with much enjoyment, and at great expense; and had pointed out to him young Fitznoodle, a live lord of tender years, who was being nourished by green turtle and champagne, under the amiable protection of Miss Debonnaire of Mrs. John Wood's *ballet*. He did the Derby, too, and Cremorne after it. He even played pound-pool in Regent Street, and looked in at "Barnes's" in the Haymarket, and wondered somewhat, after it all, that ages had done so little to eradicate the vein of intense, coarse brutishness which has come down in the British character from the man in the goatskin.

He remained long enough in England to witness the gathering of the fashionables to their "season" parade in the Ladies' Mile, and to be jostled by them in the Sunday "Zoo"; long enough to catch the lovely picture from Richmond Terrace in its summer dress, and to enjoy the still lovelier panorama of the Vale of Kent from the boot of the last of English stage-coaches. The jaunt to Tunbridge closed the book for him, and then he turned his tardy feet towards France.

Said a pleasant English friend to him as they shook hands in parting at Ludgate Hill, "*Au revoir;* but I speak it in the fear that you will soon forget our smoky old London in the Beautiful City!"

"Never!" cried Charley.

Nor did he; nor could any one lose entirely the impression which that grim,

dingy, unchanging, and untidy mother of so many millions makes upon the stranger's heart. But in the warm, golden glow of Paris the picture grows dim in a little time. Charley was fortunate to have lingered and enjoyed the parent city before he turned to its glittering neighbor across the strait. You will do well, reader mine, to follow his example.

And so in the early days of June Charley found himself in Paris. It was the Paris of the Second Empire, of Baron Haussmann and Louis Napoleon; the peerless, laughing, sinning, glorious Paris of the nineteenth century, in its sixth decade. Even then the sands were running fast in her hour of triumph, and through all the wild revel and tumult of her giddy life there fell at intervals a shadow of the future and a cry from some solitary, watchful soul. But she heard or heeded not; it was a feast where the lights shone so brightly, and hearts beat so passionately, that the words upon the wall were idle and unnoticed things. Who shall write the story of those days? who paint the scene where wealth was melted into impossible splendor, and luxury carried to nameless vice; where the man of the Faubourg vied with the prodigality of the Emperor; where woman, like the genius of fate, ruled and ruined, and where she might stand to-day in the tatters of her scarlet robe and cry with Delilah, "Behold my work"?

Ilium fuit! and we weary of the unchanged story of her succeeding sisterhood; let the man who knew Paris in her golden days fold the rare memory in his heart, and sing of it like Homer when he is blind with age.

There is an inevitable first-feeling of isolation in a new land where one hears no longer his own tongue, and finds himself surrounded by the unwonted physiognomies of another race; it makes some acquaintance a coveted boon, and it led Charley without delay to present his credentials to Monsieur Somers at the latter's apartments in the Rue Pasquier. Mr. Somers received him with something like a huzza. He was a large, almost too large, but very handsome man; an undoubted Englishman, with the skin and color of a woman, straight, full nose, and laughing light blue eyes, with heavy whiskers of the very lightest brown, and a sweeping moustache that effectually hid his mouth. A man of undefinable age, he might be thirty-five and possibly ten years older; puzzling, but attractive at first glance. Treasuring the most cordial feeling for Huntley, Charley accepted the blond giant at sight with a certain enthusiasm. Had he known Huntley better, he might have formed another estimate of Huntley's "old friend."

The gentleman at that extraordinary hour of one o'clock was just taking his coffee in his handsomely furnished parlor, and met our hero with a laughing apology for his dressing-gown and slippers. He looked like a colossal man-Venus in his scanty robes.

"My dear Mr. Wales! I am delighted. *Enfin!* Why, I am wasted with hope deferred! *Voyons;* it must be a year since Huntley wrote me of your coming!"

"Scarcely," said Charley, laughing at the irresistible *bonhomie* of the other, "not more than five months, I should think. I sailed in December."

"Ah, yes, so you did. I remember now planning something for you for the *Jour de l'an.* But you reward suspense. I am more than delighted! Your first visit to Paris, is it not? and when did you arrive?"

"It is my first. I came over yesterday."

"Is it possible? How kind of you to look me up so promptly! Will you pardon me if I finish my coffee? Try one of those cigars; we call them fair here, but I always talk small about my cigars to you American gentlemen, you are such judges. I am rather late this morning, though I am not an early bird at any time. Our big race, the Grand Prix, you know, is run to-morrow, and it has made so much late work at the club that one never gets to his bed. Only just arrived, eh! but you don't mean to tell me you have been all this time in England!"

"O yes, and found it very delightful."

Somers raised his hands in comic wonder.

"Did you really? As a born Englishman I am free to say I do not, and never did. I seldom go over. How did you find the Channel?"

"It did not strike me as being so very bad, but I noticed that nearly every one was ill."

"Of course they were, and so you would have been if you were anything but an American. It's unaccountable how little you make of ocean voyages. Me,—why I die a hundred deaths between Calais and Dover! I begin to fall ill at Amiens from sheer anticipation. I have n't asked you yet how you left Dick, the dear old fellow! He is always telling us he is coming out, but he never comes."

"I did not see him, unfortunately, when I sailed," said Charley, with a shade of embarrassment, while his host watched him over the edge of his coffee-cup, and propounded unto himself the mental inquiry, "What is the young fish made of?" "He was out of town; but a few days before he was in his usual good health, and he mentions no change in his letters."

"He is getting on in the world, too, so far as I can learn. I always thought he would; but then yours is such a country to get on in. I was near adding an important

member to its population in my own person once. I was, indeed; but as I could not, I sent Dick as the next best thing, and joined the order which neither weaves nor spins."

"I knew you were old friends," said Charley; "at least, I inferred as much from his letters — "

"Simply that, and nothing more," broke in Somers, laughing. "Of course, he does n't go into those days now he is a rising man in — what do you call it? — your Lombard Street; but we have had some ups and downs together, Dick and I, not worth the telling, you know, but we all make stock of our biographies; it 's a human weakness. So he never told you anything of our old connection? *Tant mieux!*" added the speaker to himself, with his nose buried in his cup.

"I understood simply that you were, as I have said, an old-time friend," replied Charley, who, in fact, could not at that moment remember that Huntley had ever mentioned Somers to him, and was struck for the first time by the fact; "and he begged me particularly to see you. I was only too glad to avail myself of the privilege of knowing you, and I ought to apologize for not having sent you a line explaining my delay in London. I thought of it, but I confess I am not *au fait* in these things; you must pardon my shortcomings — "

"Not to be spoken of, Mr. Wales," said Somers, ringing in the *garçon* and sending away the coffee service; "I am happy to have had you come as you did, and only sorry to have received you in this stupid fashion. We will mend all that, however, and you may discover that I am not so late, after all, as we reckon time in Paris. And now I am going to keep you company in a cigar, and cultivate your acquaintance," and suiting his action to the words, the elegant giant blew a premonitory cloud, while he took up his position like another figure of Rhodes, planting himself, from winter habit, before the closed fireplace.

"Let me say first, Mr. Somers, that I should be sorry to become a nuisance or in any way — "

"And let *me* begin, my dear fellow, by saying that you are not in the least likely to do so, and that I esteem the privilege of being of service to you a very happy one. The fact is, I am one of those supposititiously fortunate people called 'men of leisure,' — a character not only enjoyable but respectable in Paris, Mr. Wales, odious or disreputable as it may be in other lands. Huntley might have explained the fact, and saved you any scruples about commanding my services; and he might have added that it would be a peculiar gratification to me to put you right in Paris life. I am a pretty thorough Parisian; *par consequent*, I am an egotist, but I am also an artist."

Mr. Somers paused to toss his ashes daintily over his shoulder, while Charley, rather nonplussed at this exhibition of character, did not know what to say, and so said nothing. Somers resumed: "Dick writes me that you have come over for an indefinite holiday, and are likely to spend some time at Paris."

"At Paris and on the Continent generally."

"Of course; the Continent is only a suburb to Paris. Now I am going to make a little speech, Mr. Wales. It has not struck you, perhaps, that my parliamentary abilities are uncommon, — a family peculiarity, by the way; I have a big brother who talks to the Commons. Take another cigar, and bear with me in my weakness. We must have a general question settled. What I wish to ascertain is how you intend or desire to 'take your Paris,' as your countrymen are fond of saying. They take nothing 'plain,' do they, at home?"

"O yes, frequently," replied Charley, laughing. "But I don't quite gather your meaning as yet — "

"Naturally not; listen. Your young countrymen who come out here — and I have met a great many of them, I may add, and found them deuced fine fellows, as a rule — have a fashion of 'doing' the city peculiar to themselves, and which has got to be an established routine, into which they all seem to fall, as simple as it is absurd. I could put it all down in so many short paragraphs on a card, and it would serve you as an infallible guide to Paris for Americans, which is religiously heeded by them, with scarcely an exception. Mr. Thompson, for example, arrives from New York, and, obedient to recommendations, goes to Meurice's, Chatham, Louvre, or any of a dozen hotels, where he has been assured that he will 'find other Americans,' and where he will pay prices that a Frenchman hears of in mute wonder. I 'll wager you have done the same."

"I am at the Chatham, certainly," said Charley, smiling.

"Just so; and you find those 'other Americans,' who entertain you at dinner with spirited accounts, in a high key, of visits to Cluny or the Gobelins, interlard their conversation with excruciating French, and surround you with a sort of *pseudo* home atmosphere, which will soon become simply unbearable. Excuse my freedom; I am a pretty old hand on the Continent, and tolerably familiar with the different varieties of the *genus* Tourist. There is only one specimen more trying to one 's nerves than your raw American, and that is our own ineffable cockney. You will accept the *amende?*"

"It was not necessary. I can see the justice of all you say."

"Well, to return to 'Mr. Thompson.' He stops, like you, at the Chatham, and regulates his movements by the Guide. He breakfasts, like a barbarian, when Paris is taking its coffee; and when Paris is breakfasting he has found some American society and proceeded to indulge in the exotic practice of whiskey cocktails at midday. To arrive at this he posts regularly to the Grand Hotel each day, where he will not fail to find a morning coterie of his compatriots, with continual additions; this leads to new acquaintances, and the celebration of the same, after your genial custom, by the consumption of fiery compounds unknown to Europeans. It has often seemed to me that Mr. Thompson's recollections of Paris will relate mainly to those whom he met there; for he keeps this thing up frequently all day, rotating from the Grand Hotel to Thorpe's in an endless succession of new acquaintances and cocktails. To dine, he goes with a party of *confrères* to the most celebrated establishment on his list as yet unvisited. Of these places he makes it a point to try a new one every day, which prevents his becoming known and properly served; so he ends by being dissatisfied with all of them. Then he goes to Mabille, Musard, Closerie, or one of a hundred places, and gets home at any hour, with a plundered purse, and a green sickness from a hideous mixture of spirits and wine. A month of this wears him out. He believes he has 'done Paris,' thinks it rather slow, and leaves it with a disagreeable consciousness that it has been rather expensive and not very satisfactory.

"Now, I am not disposed to quarrel with your national habits, Mr. Wales, and what I have said about the whiskey-drinking is simply to illustrate. The mistake these gentlemen make is the natural one of clinging to home ideas and endeavoring to import them to a foreign soil, and, by turning some corner of Paris into New York, to live in a sort of transplanted atmosphere of their own. What should you think of a Frenchman who would go to your city, hunt out a little circle of his countrymen, and, after living three months on red wine and the traditional *croûte au feu*, return to Paris and claim to have solved the problem of life in the American metropolis, — write *feuilletons* for Figaro, even, on the peculiarities he had observed *chez* Brother Jonathan? The fact is, you Americans have nearly ruined Paris for yourselves, and in some respects for every one else. Your money demoralizes the whole contributive world of the capital, and has actually revolutionized the character of its two most important features for the visitor, namely, hotels and *cafés*. Poor Will Thackeray himself, walking his old beat in the street with the rhymeless name, would weep to find that the famous 'Bouillabaisse,' which the cook of those days made well, had given place 'to American Fish-Balls' and 'Buckwheat Cakes,' which, though not a judge, I will venture to bet he makes execrably. It is positively melancholy, Mr. Wales; the very *cuisine*, the blossom of French civilization, has been prostituted to your irregular tastes; and if I want a choice *plat*, such as we could get in fifty places in old times, I am at a loss now where to go for it."

He paused with a sigh of regret, and blew a meditative column of smoke at the opposite wall.

"Pardon my scold," he said, resuming. "It's about the only hobby I mount, this growing anarchy in the kitchen which is spoiling all our dinners. All I have said, as you may imagine, is simply in preface to the question, whether, being of the school Thompson, you expected to follow the Thompsonian method. I may as well tell you, frankly, that his ways are not mine, nor do I think *you* would find any profit or satisfaction in them."

Charley was rather puzzled. "To tell you the truth, Mr. Somers, I had not calculated on putting myself under — that is, making myself a burden on your hands — "

"There it is again! You chaps from the other side do everything by 'calculation.' It is n't French; none of those sober abstractions are French. Let us compromise, Mr. Wales. Give me a month to develop *my* scheme, and then, if it is n't agreeable, we will dissolve."

Charley did not clearly understand what he was subscribing to, but the genial Bohemian was quite irresistible.

"I put myself entirely in your hands, Mr. Somers; but I must also confess that I should enjoy meeting my fellow-Americans, even," he added, laughing, "'Mr. Thompson,' for want of a better."

"Of course, of course; and I did n't mean to convey the idea that 'Thompson' is a bad fellow to meet, not at all; only we will not agree to join him in his peculiar crusade against Paris *en masse*. Three o'clock! By Jove! I *am* late! By the way, how is your French?"

"Not very good, I fear," replied Charley.

"Bookish, eh?" echoed Somers, who had dived into his dressing-room, and was rapidly completing a street toilet. "We 'll soon arrange that."

He came out directly, with hat and cane, and fitted on the first before the glass; after which he turned to Charley with the peculiarly winning smile which had quite captured our hero.

"I understand, then, that you commit yourself to my experienced and fatherly charge?" he said, gayly.

"Since you will take the trouble, Mr. Somers," answered Charley, rising, and taking up his hat. "But I beg you will not let me interfere with — with your business — "

Somers cut him short with a ringing laugh. He was lighting a fresh cigar, and signed to Charley to do the same.

"Another word not in our vocabulary. We have *affaires*, Mr. Wales, but never any 'business.' We have one to dispose of now, preliminary to our happy incorporation as a society of two for mutual entertainment and protection, which, if you are agreeable, we will despatch at once."

"I am with you," cried Charley, already enthusiastic in his admiration for the gay Englishman.

"*Allons!* and I suggest we drop the ceremonies. People call me 'Ned'; and you — ?"

"People call me 'Charley,'" answered our hero, following the other down the stairway. Somers stopped half-way to make another suggestion. "And suppose we use the French now as much as we can." Then they passed out, and went around by the Madeleine into the Boulevard Malesherbes. Somers paused before a row of splendid new houses, and, after consulting numbers, entered one of them, and under the guidance of the concierge proceeded to a suite of large and rather luxuriously furnished rooms in the *entresol*. Somers inspected them with a critical eye, and at the conclusion of the ceremony turned to the wondering Charley.

"What do you think of the apartments? Not bad, are they?"

"They are princely," responded our hero, who was "all at sea"; "who lives in them?"

"We do, or may if we choose. We are lucky to get them. I heard of them the other day, and said to myself, 'Now where is that long-coming young man?' And I was awfully afraid they would be snapped up before you got along. There is nothing to be had where I am, and, moreover, the house has ceased to be pleasant, having received a recent addition on my floor in the person of a German professor who has nightly transports of improvisation on the piano, fit to shatter your brain. If they suit you, we 'll take them."

"Of course; but I don't quite understand — "

"You will, though; the location is the best in Paris, the figures are reasonable, and I am quite sure," continued the speaker, turning with a smile to the rosy, white-capped concierge and speaking in French, "that Madame is as kind as she is beautiful, and will do everything to make us good and happy young men, even to an occasional *café pour quatre* in the morning; is it not so, Madame?"

Madame courtesied and darted a reproving glance smothered in a smile at the speaker, — a French substitute for a blush. "The gentlemen will have the best attendance in the world."

"Of course we shall; Madame's charming face is an unimpeachable guaranty. Was it not Madame's superb little dog we saw below? To be sure, and such a beauty! One hundred and fifty by the month, I think Madame said, *c'est çà*. That 's the whole expense," he continued to Charley, "with a trifle for service; coffee extra, and that is all you require where you sleep."

Charley "saw it" rather dimly, but was amused; and as he made no objections, the bargain was closed. They stopped a moment at Somers's quarters, where he gave orders to his *garçon* to pack and transfer his effects, and afterwards at the Chatham, where Charley made his arrangements for the change; and then Somers selected one of a long line of *panier* cabs with the eye of experience, woke the ever-sleeping Jehu thereof, and bade Charley get in, while he gave the coachee some instructions.

"There!" said Somers, taking his place by Charley, as they drove away over the asphalt of the Boulevards towards the east, "I know what your tourist instinct craves, and I am going to be your *valet de place* for this afternoon, and give you an instantaneous view, as the photographers call it, of divers exteriors. You can go over the work at your leisure afterwards, in which entertaining proceeding I won't agree to join you. Parisians never go to see their own 'lions,' you know. It 's just the same in London; Fleet Street never goes to St. Paul's, and your true West-Ender will swear he never saw the Tower. It 's safe to say that the majority of these fellows who lounge on the Boulevard three hundred days in the year have never set foot in the Salon Carré. That 's the Grand Hotel, — you know it, of course; and the Opera, an enormous, ornamented guitar-box, which pleases nobody, and has ruined the Rue de la Paix. Café Americain, you observe, — 'Peter's' we call it, — sacred to the American eagle. You will find unequalled magnificence there, 'mixed drinks,' and everything but good cooking. Peter is a Swiss; I knew him years ago when he broiled his own *filets* in a little place down by the river. Afterwards he established himself in the Passage des Princes, — we pass it directly, — and the opera balls made him. Latterly your countrymen made a specialty of him; he put 'Bourbon Whiskey' and 'Sherry Cobblers' in gilt on his windows, and reaped a fortune that has enabled him to set up here on a scale of splendor un-

equalled in Paris or, probably, in the world. The unfinished corner adjoining will be our new Vaudeville; the old one, where Fechter maddened the women of Paris in 'Armand,' is down by the Bourse. Famous street that, — Chaussée d'Antin, — but wonderfully changed since I knew it. Up the hill is Clichy, with Batignolles and the undiscovered countries beyond. Café Helder, over there, used to be the best place in Paris for a breakfast; but the influx of *demi-monde* ruins them all. Once the man at the pot knows his *salmi* is going into a female maw, he forswears all effort and sends up anything; the epicurean sense has been denied to woman, and he knows it. You shall see the Helder and Peter's at two in the morning. Here are the others, — the Riche; Maison Dorée, where the old Duke of Hamilton broke his neck on the stairs; the Anglais, Grand Balcon, and a host of smaller ones, good, bad, and indifferent. The Riche is the best, perhaps; but the fine eaters do not come to the Boulevards. Handsome shops, are they not? Less splendid but more uniform than yours in 'Broadway,' — eh? I have been thus informed. The Passages are pretty; Peter's is in there, the old place. Down to the Bourse by that street; a fine shell that nobody ever sees. These are the arches St. Denis and St. Martin; look like resuscitated giants of antiquity who have lost their way and stand wondering at this rainbow crowd, don't they? Getting out of the world now; you would never come up here, you know, except to the Swiss transit, or after dark to the theatres. That's the Cirque Napoleon, where you will see ten thousand *bourgeois* go into convulsions nightly over an American clown, and sweeten the earth with cut sugar for the trained poodles. Here is the July column, — the forefinger of Revolution, discreetly remote from the Tuileries. Belleville and Villette lie about here, comfortably hedged in by these fine masses of new buildings. Look like palaces, do they not? They are only barracks. Turn down here, and you need a guide-book, — Hotel de Ville, the Sainte Chapelle, Tour St. Jacques, etc, etc. Heloise lived in one of those rookeries, and here we are at Notre Dame. Fine, is it not? I like it best of all, I think. That's the Morgue over there, with the never-ceasing throng coming and going; they say it is the popular rendezvous for the lovers of the Cité — fancy! Singular beings these French; they go into an ecstasy of fear over a bug on the carpet, but they come here for amusement, and gaze composedly at the body of a man that has been five days in the Seine. It is rather horrible. I went in there once with a medical friend, — one of the mistakes of my life. There was a strangled baby on one slab, and the spectacle was a nightly feature of my dreams for a month. Pont Neuf, — look out for a 'white horse, a soldier, and a priest,' and test the virtue of a saying as old as the stones of the bridge, which declares that you can never cross without meeting all three. Several of each, sure enough! I never saw it fail. The 'Man of Destiny' was a sixth-story lodger over yonder as Lieutenant Bonaparte, — that high, pointed window; fine view he had of his future residence across the river, — the Tuileries. Yonder is the old Conciergerie; you must go there and see the 'Registers of Doom,' if we can work it. We are in venerable, historic Paris now. I know of nothing more picturesque and characteristic than these crooked, dark streets, with their quaint houses and shops. It is the ancient domain of student and grisette, and what the fellows of the schools are still fond of calling the 'brain of Paris,' though Molière has no successor at the worn table in the Café Procope, and Victor Hugo has eclipsed Racine at the Odéon. The grisette too is an obsolete shadow, and the traditional student has been quietly smothered with the other disturbing elements. 'Babette' wears a bonnet now; and Paul is more likely to be a phlegmatic Teuton, who is profiting by the *Sorbonne* while he nurses his peculiar contempt for the French. Rum little byways and corners, are they not? their antiquity is indestructible. Here we are! *Descendons!*"

Charley woke from a daze at the word, and followed the speaker from the cab to the walk, where Somers, after tossing the fare to the *cocher*, drew his attention to one of a venerable row of buildings before them. Though massed in a solid block, each of the old tenements possessed a certain antique individuality which made it a study of itself; a long line of shops ran through the lower floors, and sacrilegious modern additions of paint and stucco had given them all a touch of grotesque rejuvenation about the base; but they towered above with an indignant assertion of age, publishing their ancient claims upon the tops, where the wilderness of distorted chimneys, cocked roofs, and dormer-windows formed that curious picture of an aerial world, sacred to romance and flower-pots and sunset flirtations with attic beauties, which is a never-to-be-forgotten feature of *vieux* Paris.

"You observe that venerable pile? This is the Rue de Buci, which we entered from the Rue de Seine, and that is Numero 05, 'as I always shall remember.' I had the felicity of making my Parisian *début* there and hereabouts in the scientific and honorable capacity of a student of medicine. I weep to think how long ago that was! Up

yonder are the Odéon and Foyot's; on our right the School of Medicine, and on our left, down among those inextricable streets, Magny's and the Procope. Below us is the Sorbonne, with the Palais Royal across the stream, and these constituted the extreme limits of civilization for us in those days, the points of the Paris compass whereby we navigated our several canoes. Ah me! I was never a very brilliant student; but I turned out a very fair Frenchman. There is n't a stone in the street I don't know; I helped to displace some of them in '48, the most arduous bit of exercise I ever indulged in in my life, and distinguished myself by leading a spirited and successful charge against the establishment of a crusty old wine-merchant in the Rue Jacob, to whom every soul of us was hopelessly in debt. Let 's go in. I want you to know one of my old *confrères* who lives here, singularly enough, in the same antiquated house where I begun my career in Latium, only he has the second flat fitted to the verge of splendor, while I was an attic philosopher and had my one room principally furnished with pipes and broken-backed chairs. I was the student *en regle* practising the profound contempt for the economies peculiar to the order; but Vasour is an *interne* now and a practising professor, and about the cleverest Frenchman I know. *Bon jour*, Nannette. Look at the old girl! To all appearances she has worn that same spotless cap and apron for thirty years; she looked just as old, or young, in them, the first time I ever saw her, as she does this moment. She was a tripping grisette under Louis Seize, I suspect, and could tell us of the dark days and the red caps. I remember well her speechless consternation once when I made my appearance in the breakfast-room in a crimson casquette I had picked up on the Riviera. And Monsieur Vasour, Nannette?"

"Monsieur is gone to dine."

"Has he? How long since?"

"One little moment *seulement* he is gone."

"Good! I know well where to find him, and we will join his mess. You will not come often to the Quartier, you know, to dine," continued Somers, bowing to the concierge and locking arms with Charley as they passed out and took their way towards the Luxembourg; "but it does not follow that the cuisine at Foyot's is to be despised. Sometimes, coming over here after an interval, I almost fancy it is better than the best in the Palais Royal."

"I shall prove an indifferent judge, I guess," said Charley, to whom the day had been one of pleasant but suppressed excitement, and who felt now a peculiar exhilaration as they walked up the picturesque Rue de Tournon; "I am afraid I don't possess what you term the 'epicurean germ,' but I know I am disgracefully hungry. What 's that down there?"

"Sainte Sulpice; it was the temple of the old aristocracy before the Madeleine was thought of. Ahead is the Luxembourg; it is heavy and sombre, but I like it. The Emperor has broken the hearts of the old Faubourg by cutting up its magnificent gardens into building-lots. He is an implacable enemy to large areas and narrow, sinuous approaches as witness the new Boulevards, and he will end by making mob-multitudes and barricades absolute impossibilities in Paris. Here we are!"

They had reached the angle of the street, the end of it, indeed, where the rather grim relic of the wonderful Medici blood stops the way, and Somers entered the open door of the corner house, which some time-stained letters on the exterior wall proclaimed to the world was the Restaurant du Luxembourg, better known as "Foyot's."

Somers led the way with the readiness of an *habitué* to a salon on the second floor, and found Vasour at his usual table busy over his introductory radishes and *crevettes* behind the universal *Figaro*. Somers beat down the barrier of the latter rather unceremoniously, and introduced Charley to his friend; after which he pulled up two additional seats and rang lustily for the *garçon*. Vasour laughed heartily at the Titanic impetuosity of the Englishman, while he gracefully acknowledged Charley's bow. He had a fine, dark face, with hair to match; but the toil of study had worn deep lines in the one, and prematurely silvered the other. There was a rare charm in his features, however, when lighted up in conversation; and from the rapid *causerie* which ensued between him and Somers during a long repast, Charley gathered his first delighted impressions of the marvellous grace of the French language in that light but brilliant play of thought peculiar to those whose native tongue it is — inimitable and untranslatable. He could participate but little in the play of words, but he was not allowed to feel a moment's awkwardness or constraint. Vasour had waited to know that he understood the language, and from that moment colored his manner and his words with a delicate, studied deference to Charley which fairly captivated our hero and led him to the unspoken conclusion, at the third bottle of Leoville, that a cultivated Parisian was the highest type of grace he had yet seen. The dinner, too, was a triumph; Somers was the constructive genius, assisted by Vasour, who frankly acknowledged, however, that the Englishman was his superior in the *esthétique* of the table. But though Charley's enjoyment of the dinner and company could not possibly have

been greater, he was too new to the sweet sin of table-worship to form an intelligent estimate of the rare excellence of the repast. He knew only that the food was ambrosial, and the wine a warm, rich blood, and under the influence of both he grew rather ecstatic. A dim conviction forced itself into his fancy that he had lived a barbarian up to that hour, and that he had entered another atmosphere, where life was divested of dross and scientifically reduced to the pure gold of pleasure. He sealed the impression with his last glass of purple Bordeaux, and went down with his companions to the coffee-room, where Madame Foyot herself, the ample, smiling dame, whose kindly face is photographed in the memories of more men than I would venture to number, sat in her chair of state and ruled, a benignant genius of mocha and the weed. The pretty, busy *salon*, with its throng of evening guests, the Orient odor of coffee, and clouds of smoke, the groups of absorbed chess-players, and noisy tables of *écarté* and piquet, the ever-merry tumult of conversation, and the conspicuous wit of more than one repeated jest, the fun and good-nature and thoroughly mutual enjoyment that prevailed, all served to strengthen our hero's enthusiastic prepossession in favor of Parisian life. The spell of this life was in full possession of his senses; London, if he paused to recall it, would have seemed a far, misty vision of the past; and when he rode home with Somers, after bidding Vasour good night at his door, it was in a delicious, dreamy state of mind which rendered him rather absent and incoherent in his replies to the questions of his worthy companion.

"I asked Vasour to make a third in our landau to-morrow at the races," said Somers; "but he pleaded an engagement. Clever, is n't he?"

"Wonderfully," returned Charley; "every one is clever at Paris, *n'est ce pas?*"

"Generally, at and after dinner. Beware though of an empty or a badly fed Frenchman!"

The establishment in the Malesherbes was indeed, "princely," and the rooms seemed the embodiment of comfort and luxury under the soft light of the big candelabra. Somers flung himself in herculean *abandon* on a lounge, and surveyed the scene with deep satisfaction.

"Snug, is it not? We were deuced lucky to get them; and now *couchons!* We have a long day before us to morrow."

Charley was only too glad to avail himself of the privilege; he was worn out in mind and body, though he had not realized it until with a return to quiet the excitement of the day was succeeded by the natural reaction. He was in a deep, dreamless sleep before Somers had finished his habitual half-pipe of tobacco, as that gentleman, glancing in at Charley's door before going to his own room, perceived.

Mr. Somers arranged his night toilet in a meditative mood. "Nice boy he seems to be. I wonder whatever can be Huntley's scheme? 'Tie him up!' Humph! *et comment?* Can't say I like the commission, or, indeed, perceive exactly how the thing is to be done. Just like that inscrutable Dick. Not to hear a word of him in five years, and then be called on to play third hand without even knowing what's trumps. *Mais enfin!* the campaign opens cheerfully. What an ineffable comfort to have got these quarters, — the ambition of years. Sleep sweetly, Edward, on the field of victory! But how? 'Tie him up' like Schneider to a *Post!* Good, that was. *Eh bien!* sufficient unto the day —"

And Monsieur Edward relapsed into oblivion with this rather hackneyed dismissal of worldly cares in scriptural phrase.

CHAPTER VII.

LAUGHING LUTETIA.

THE bright skies smiled their sweetest the next morning, when the gay world, lingering in the Beautiful City to celebrate its concluding summer festivities, opened its drowsy eyes and remembered what day it was. The French "Darby" — since every born Englishman so calls it, it seems absurd to write the word *Derby* — was a refined copy of the English event. Every one went out to assist at it, for it was run on a Sunday, when all men above the actual *sans culotte* are at leisure in Paris, and every one was ecstatic and excited, and thoroughly imbued with the fantastic enthusiasm with which the Parisian enters into matters of a sportive kind; but the demarcation of class was no less sharply drawn on that day, and of that terrific rowdyism and unrebuked license of the mob which make the day at Epsom a scene of hideous communism there was no sign at Longchamps. The immaculate fossil of the Jockey Club and the gilded irresistibles of the Maison Dorée need fear no stain to their matchless exteriors from showers of plebeian eggs or siroccos of lime and flour. There would be no rampant disorder on the road, or brutal and indecent exhibitions in the field, no private prize-fighting or mountebank prodigies of disgust, no dreadful, invisible phalanx of pickpockets, and little if any of that shameless drunkenness which makes half a million contemporaneous headaches in London once a year. People would have a "good time," for, starting out with that object, the Parisian knew no such word as fail; and there would be wine and intrigue and wickedness

and some exaggerated gayety. Anonyma would sit in high places, and Breda elbow her way to the very side of St. Germain, and the "man as he should be" would smile alike on each; for it was France and Paris, *capitale du monde*, where custom no longer submitted to criticism, and real life scorned the government of rules. It was Sunday, to be sure, though the stone-cutters of Antoine would swarm like bees upon the unfinished Opera House, and Haussmann's army of brawny iconoclasts pause no instant in the cutting of ruthless pathways through whole squares of storied old tenements. Working-day Paris recked little of seventh days. Monday, more than any other, was that of rest; but there would still be a general closing of shops on this, both on the Boulevards and in the by-streets; and the Rive Gauche as well as the northern faubourgs would send its thousands to the Long Field. We might see them at this early morning hour in their gay fête-day robes debouching from a hundred streets upon the pretty *quais*, and merging there into a vast throng from which the several streams will flow down to the trim little Seine steamers for Point du Jour and over the bridges to the Palais Royal, whence start the omnibuses for Passy and Auteuil. An army will reach the Bois by those routes; another will enter it *à pied*, trudging patiently, even gayly, the whole long way by the Champs Elysées and the Avenue of the Empress, pausing at every second step to turn and view the marvellous panorama of the road, and arriving hot and wearied, but indefatigable, on the ground. A cold "bock" of Fontaine's Vienna beer, a cigarette of *Capparal* (in which both possibly participate), and Jean and Marie are themselves again. On the great highways rolls the central column of the holiday throng, *beau-monde*, *demi-monde*, *monde-étranger*, in an endless variety of vehicles, from the cavernous and cumbrous landau of Monsieur le Duc, down to the simple *panier* which honest Citizen Duval, purveyor of *saucissons* to the population of Popincourt, has engaged at a bargain for the day, and which, with its load of Monsieur and Madame, five children and *cocher*, — eight, all told, — is dragged along by a single little indomitable horse in the wondrous procession.

What a spectacle it was! A glittering stream of humanity, winding like an enormous serpent along the most beautiful of thoroughfares, which the stranger, standing at the Obelisk, might follow with his wondering eye in an unbroken line to the Arch of the Star, two miles away.

A flutter and a trumpet-blast, and the living river divides along its whole length to give passage to a squadron of magnificent horsemen, whose helmets of gold and long streaming plumes of silk flash and flaunt in the air as the riders thunder past. They are the mysterious Cent Gardes, and closely following rolls the imperial equipage, in which sits "our neighbor of the Tuileries" with his wife and child. You know him at once, the gray, stern, watchful face, somewhat softened now as he strives to have it, as he returns the salutes of the people. And you may know her too, the sweet-faced, smiling woman at his side, who bends so gracefully and wins your heart, and even makes you forget that she sits an empress in a stolen chair. The mass closes in again behind them like parted waters; and stemming her way in the wake of the imperial *cortége* a blond goddess of the Folies, seated in her coach of triumph, scarcely less splendid than the Emperor's own, pursues her lightsome route, — a significant picture, at which we smile as we replace our hats.

The noon of this day found Charley and his new friend and guide enjoying a delightful breakfast under the shade of ingeniously twined trees at Passy. Somers had preferred this quiet and gradual manner of approach, representing its advantages with the wisdom of experience: "We should have stifled with heat and dust on the road; all the *balayeurs* in Babylon could not reduce the amount of either on the Avenue to-day, though they had the entire Seine in their hose; and as for the crowd, we shall see the cream of it on the field. We can drive out quietly to Passy, and breakfast luxuriously in a miniature wood, — there's a fair *café* there, where some square yards of nature do duty for a dining-room, — and enter the Bois afterwards at our leisure. I think you will be amused."

So they had gone out before the gathering of the multitude, and were pleasantly installed at their rustic table when the tide was beginning to swell in the Champs. And Charley *was* amused, though to his charmed senses a lesser cause than the excited and imaginative Frenchmen about them, who found all the enchantment of Armida's garden in the little enclosure of saplings, and did homage to their several Amaryllises in an exuberant, pastoral style, ludicrous beyond description, would have yielded rare delight.

"Funny, is n't it?" said Somers, lingering over his glass of Graves; "look at those people, how they enjoy it! You have no conception of the intense pleasure that floods the soul of a middle-class Parisian when he finds himself in what he calls 'the country.' The *parti à la campagne* is his highest idea of earthly bliss. Auteuil is an Eden, Fontainebleau heaven itself, in his philosophy. They excel this at Sceaux,

however, where you sit down to dinner fifteen in a tree-top. We will do the 'environs' some day; they are full of attractions."

The great stalls were thronged, and the occupants of the imperial pagoda in their places, when our friends arrived at the course, where, procuring betting-ring cards, they left their landau and strolled through the maze of rich equipages. Somers gossiped in his usual style, as they wound their way leisurely onward. His frequent salutes betokened a numerous acquaintance, and more than once Charley felt himself to be the object of close scrutiny by the gay company of some splendid coach.

"You see that old shadow over there being taken tender care of?" rattled Somers; "that 's Auber, and that other fossil with a perpendicular backbone is Brunswick, the man of diamonds. Why, we 're surrounded by the Orphean celebrities! That 's Hervé yonder; and that little Jew dandy, sitting with the corpulent man, is Jean Offenbach. His companion is Villemessant, *redacteur* of the Figaro. There is a merry party of your countrymen. The aroma of independence marks them even in this mixed crowd; only it 's a pity that they should begin so early and so recklessly on the champagne. You have n't seen the Emperor yet? We will saunter down. Ah! I must stop here an instant."

He dropped Charley's arm as he spoke, and advanced, bowing, to the side of a carriage which with its occupants was well-nigh hidden from view by the circle of gentlemen that surrounded it. Charley, following with his eyes the movements of his friend, noted the fact with some curiosity. He did not immediately look again, but when he did so he met the laughing eyes of a lady who had raised herself slightly in her place, evidently to see him; and, overcome by a sudden and unaccountable confusion, he moved away abruptly, not hearing the little call which Somers gave at the same instant. It was an absurd thing to do, but in five minutes he had hopelessly lost himself in the crowd. He could find neither Somers nor their conveyance, and after fruitless efforts he gave himself up to the situation, sat down philosophically and saw the great French race run by English jockies, and after it, not being familiar with the main route, walked briskly back to the *barrière* at Passy, and took a cab to the Malesherbes.

As for Somers, he excused himself to his fair acquaintance at once, on observing that Charley had disappeared, and made an unavailing attempt to find him in the throng. He returned alone to the lady's carriage with a rueful face.

"*Le pauvre Hercule!*" cried she whose eyes had routed our Charley. She sat in state, with an elderly lady of smiling mien at her side, and a court of aristocratic gallants about her, who were visibly envious of the familiarity accorded to the colossal Englishman. "One would think," she said, "that Omphale had been scolding! *Mais, dites donc* — who is your Apollo?"

Somers smiled saucily, and shook his head at the questioner.

"Pardon, Madame la Baronne; it is an infant from the land of the Mohicans, sent to my especial care; he must be spared."

"*La belle affaire!*" laughed the beauty, with a *moue* at the Bohemian which sent a thrill through the hearts of the admiring observers assembled. "I honor your scruples, my good man, and in recognition of them," she added, leaning forward and speaking to him alone, "I order you to bring him to *déjeuner* to-morrow, *peine d'amende! Bon jour*, Monsieur le Compte! *bon jour*, Monsieur Gedran! When I go to the wicked places, I meet all my friends. Remember!" — she called to Somers, who was giving place to the new-comers, and was bowing a retreat, — "remember my orders," and the injunction was accompanied by a pretty menace with a fan. Somers, too far removed to reply, bowed again, and betook himself, somewhat thoughtfully, to the betting-ring. "What a 'go' that *would* be, to be sure!" he said to himself, half audibly, as he approached a group of excited sportsmen. A moment later he was immersed in the affairs of the field, and did not recall the existence of his "charge" until seated in his conveyance on the way home. He found our hero comfortably disposed on several chairs, trying to worry through the epigrams of the *Gaulois* and a French plagiarism on a cigar.

"Ah! home all right? How the deuce did you manage to lose yourself so suddenly? or were you carried off bodily?"

"I 'll be hanged if I know!" returned Charley, assuming the upright. "Neither could I make out who won in the race."

"O — the Frenchmen! The English horses were nowhere, and lost everything, precisely as I anticipated. There will be rare offerings to the gods to-night over the success of the French stables. Are you ready for dinner?"

"Very much ready, I might say, — I am starved!"

"Good! we 'll go to Voisin's; it 's convenient, and we may see and hear something of the sore-heads from over the Channel, as they go there *en masse;* but we are Frenchmen, *bien entendu.* I beg of you not to betray us by any inadvertent English."

"I fancy my French will do that quite as effectually —"

"Never, to English ears; and, indeed, your French is capital. *Allons!*"

Charley was burning to inquire of his companion about the owner of the laughing gray eyes, whose glances lingered pertinaciously in his memory; but he did not summon courage to do so until late at dinner, after the excited knots of English gentry about them had lost their interest, or finished their dinners and gone away grumbling. Then, under cover of his wineglass, he asked, indifferently enough, "Who was the fêted lady for whom you deserted me so incontinently out at the race?"

"To be sure!" cried Somers. "I had forgotten. *She?* my dear fellow, it is the only woman on earth!"

Charley looked up rather quizzically, but the expression of Somers's face checked his rising smile.

"I caught but a glimpse of her; she seemed a very handsome woman."

"Beautiful as she is good, and good as she is beautiful," continued Somers, soberly. "I will tell you more of her some time; meanwhile you are honored by an opportunity of knowing her."

Charley looked rather frightened, and was, indeed, thoroughly puzzled; it was not easy correctly to estimate the character of one of whom the volatile Bohemian spoke in such tones and terms.

"I shall be very happy, I'm sure —"

"We are to breakfast with her to-morrow," continued Somers, not noticing his words. "I had nearly forgotten it, what with doubles or quits at Longchamps, and the acid chatter of these fellows, — how they hate to lose!"

No more was said respecting the unnamed lady, and they sallied out soon after, and took their way up the Rue St. Honoré.

"We must peep at Saturnalia to-night, but it is early yet," said Somers, looking at his watch. "Too hot for the theatres, is n't it? Schneider sings in "Diva" at the Bouffes, and Blanche d'Autigny at the Folies; but we should only envy the cool nakedness of the ballet. Suppose we air our cigars in a cab?"

"As you will."

They found a basket-wagon in the Place, and the *cocher* having called on his saints to witness that his horse had not moved an inch all day, they got in and pursued their way up the Champs in the delicious evening air. Those to whom the enchanted night-scene of the Elysian Fields in summer is a treasured memory, will not wonder that Charley's first feeling was a sort of childish thrill at being ushered into imagined fairy-land. The long vista of stately trees, each a Herne's oak with a madcap, elfin circle about its feet; the pretty patches of shrubbery and flowery mounds, with a thousand shaded paths winding in and out among them; the millions of flashing lights gathered here and there into brilliant constellations at the *cafés-concerts;* the fountains and music, and the gay, restless multitude of people giving life and motion to it all, — formed a picture unique in the world, dazzling and almost unearthly. A woman's voice, clear and full, and soaring above the sea-like murmur of the crowded gardens, in the *brindisi* from *Traviata,* reached the ears of our friends as they drove lazily along the road.

"Mademoiselle Thomas!" ejaculated Somers. "She sings like an angel, and yet she is in the very last stage of consumption. One would never suspect the sad fact from a voice like that. Look at the crowd about Guignol, and the children on those merry-go-rounds! If they were any but French children, they 'd have been abed these two hours. People scold at the Empire; by Jove! I should like to be shown a picture of popular enjoyment equal to this in any other corner of the world!"

Laurent's pretty restaurant gleamed with light and echoed with life as they passed, and a throng of carriages surrounded the Cirque de l'Imperatrice.

"They will have a rare audience there to-night," said Somers; "money could not buy a single stall. A great *fête* at Mabille always draws a corresponding crowd at the Cirque, and a thoroughly aristocratic one, too. Not daring to go to the former, its patrons do the next best thing, and come here, — next door, you might say. It 's the simplest thing in the world, you see, to make the circus the excuse and Mabille the object."

"Mabille is tabooed, then, among the respectables?"

"Among the French, decidedly. For our people, *en touriste,* it may be looked at *once* by a lady with perfect propriety, time and occasion being considered. Anything like a succession of visits is a dangerous or at least unwise experiment, though certain of your countrywomen have taken the risk. It is 'jolly,' you know, but it is a mistake, after all. Foreign ladies are at a sad disadvantage in Paris, at the best; they will ignore native ideas, but you can't change the traditional customs of a thousand years; and it is just the same in the Italian cities. Your English or American woman will rebel against the social rule which forbids her to go alone to her shoemaker's, two blocks from her hotel in the Rue de la Paix. *Eh bien!* she may do it successfully once in ten; but if she has been *twice* to Mabille, she is dead sure of an 'experience' on the route."

They had arrived at the Arch by this time, but, tempted by the coolness and beauty of the night, pursued their course onward by the avenue, which was full of

flickering lights that made it look like a long train of fireflies, leading from the mighty monument to the entrance of the Bois. A myriad of air-seekers, in fact, were swarming out again over the same path of the day-throng, filling the avenue, and wellnigh filling the wood, where all the branching roads were flooded with their cabs.

"Look at them!" cried Somers, as they passed the Barrière, with that genius of figures in his place who must that day have taken the numbers of ten thousand *voitures*, and emerged into the forest shade. "The material for crowds in Paris is incredible; tell off a dozen great armies for a dozen several points, and a mass remains equal to the composition of as many more. There is a reserve population which is as inexhaustible as an ant-hill. A stranger would say to-night, looking at the Champs and the central Boulevards, that all Paris was divided between them; but here is a league of forest alive with people, and he will find like multitudes at Monceaux, at the Luxembourg, and on the 'cross-town Boulevards; at all the theatres, at Bullier, Chateau Rouge, Mabille, Reine Blanche, — everywhere. Let him try, for an experiment, to find a corner in Paris to-night where there is *not* a crowd. I don't believe it can be done!"

They made the tour of the lake, and, halting at Fontaine's, lingered long over a refreshing mug of *biere de Vienne*, gathering endless amusement from the study of the merry table-groups about them. It was nearly midnight when they came down the avenue again into the city, meeting, even at that hour, hundreds of noisy cabloads pursuing the outward course. Charley could not repress his astonishment.

"Heavens! do these people never sleep?"

"You will repeat the question with more propriety two or three hours hence," said Somers. "Why, life is just beginning now for half of Paris! You shall see. — A *Mabille, cocher! eveille-toi!*"

Cocher was fast asleep, of course. Slumber is *cocher's* normal condition in the city of the sleepless, of which he is a mystic and unique production. He responded to Somers's sharp orders only by a guttural *bon! m'sieu'*, opening one eye by sleepy instinct when the turning at the avenue Montaigne was reached, and landing them at the illumined portal two minutes later, with his organs of vision sealed alike to them, to the many-colored glare, and the stately gensdarmes who ornamented the entrance like monuments of decorative art.

"Tell me, *cocher*," said Somers, laughing, as he gave the man his fare and drink-money, "you have slept the whole way from Fontaine's, eh?"

"Monsieur has *parfaitement raison*," responded the hero of the glazed hat with sober dignity, as he wheeled away to give place to the ever-arriving throng.

Mabille was a madness that night as the two entered; even Somers gave a little whistle as they drew up outside the great circle promenade, and Charley was speechless at the spectacle. Rubens's wildest dream of a bacchanal would be a congregation of colorless shadows beside the scene that met their eyes, and the master-hands which piled the walls of the Sistine and the Ducal Palace with writhing masses of humanity might still have shrunk from the task of portraying this. The simple dance-garden — pitiable, gilded mart of flesh that it was — sometimes acquired a kind of dignity simply by the colossal proportions that it took on. It had been thus magnified to-night, and he must have been a rare ascetic who, standing in the full glare of the *ensemble*, could still dismember and reduce it to the paltry and hideous details of which it was mainly composed. There were legions of women and a great host of men; women of every country, of every hue, of a dozen tongues, and a bewildering variety of dress. The Egyptian girl with her bronze skin and strange, fantastic costume; the Italian and the Greek, scarcely less dark, and sharing equally the haunting charm of the black, unfathomable eye of the East; the pure blond *Flammande*, all pale gold and rose, with a cloud of yellow hair, like Rubens's Venuses, or better fulfilling, perhaps, the idea of the beautiful Scandinavian Fates; and her sister blonde of England, less fair and infinitely coarser, with the man's hand, the man's voice, and little of the woman but her smooth beauty; the North German, with wide foreheads, sleepy blue eyes, plaited hair, and the sadly incongruous *hausfrau* look; the tall, thin *Russe*, flashing with diamonds, thrilling you with strange, imperious eyes, and filling you with wonder at the marvellous linguistic skill of the far Northerner; the silent *Espagnole*, the transplanted *Americaine*, and the *Parisienne* herself, least in beauty but queen unquestioned; the feverish, quenchless embodiment of the whole, sacrificing life to passion, and embracing sin with exultant frenzy. And to mate these some hundreds of Frenchmen, sallow, worn, and fleshless men, with circled eyes warmed into a blaze by *absinthe*, whose very smiles were brutal sneers, and on whom 'wreck' was written in ineffaceable lines. A sprinkling of foreign male faces filled up the picture; here and there an awkward group of cockneydom striving to master the situation, but suffering from evident embarrassment and rather frightened, and other, more numerous groups of Americans in no degree perturbed.

A single face looming above the ocean of heads fastened the attention of our Charley; it was a round, small-featured, freckled face, fringed with belligerent sandy whiskers, and surmounted by a sweltering Breadalbane bonnet. There was a pinched look about the nose, and a pursed expression about the mouth, while the sharp, gray eyes surveyed the scene with a certain contemptuous look: it was the tourist Scotchman, the philosopher, traveller of the world *par excellence;* and Charley could not but mark the emotionless countenance as that, perhaps, of the only strong-anchored soul in all those hundreds.

There did not lack action for all these actors. The great orchestra in the central pagoda swelled the opening notes of the "last quadrille," and a wave of outward motion cleared the circle of dancing-ground at the same instant. Terpsichore — if, indeed, the sweet Muse acknowledged the legitimacy of the cotillon *à la Prefecture* — has long since ceased to reign at Mabille. For the historic *can-can* one must go to Bullier, where it flourishes with startling vigor. In the Avenue Montaigne he will find on ordinary evenings only a neglected circle of hired professionals, who tread the famous measure with the ease of gymnasts and the indifference of old stagers. But this night the rules are all broken, the bounds all ignored; as the music quickens and the restless throng presses closer about the dancers, with its thousand-tongued clamor of laughter and applause, more than one queen of the promenade gathers her train with a toss over her arm and springs into the ring with a huzza; she might be an empress in her robe of shimmering silk, with the cluster-brilliants gleaming on her throat and in her hair; but she is only a Bacchante, after all, and a very furious and reckless one too, at whom one looks in fascination and in terror. Her favored follower springs after her; it is young Vaurien, perhaps, scattering his father's millions, or Baron Boncœur, with twoscore years on his infatuated head. The after-agonies will be horrible to either human shadow probably, but they dash as madly into the demoniacal jig as their mad mistress, regardless of the sacrifice of limb or dignity. The roar of the instruments is drowned in the roar of tongues; the very trees above and the weird, unnatural flowering shrubs of iron and gas and colored glasses seem to catch the frenzy and bend and sway like the quivering mass about them. The loiterers in the by-paths and the *café* desert their seclusion to join the revel, and the dense circle heaves and trembles with the intense excitement of the moment, which finds a fitting culmination of glare and explosion in the six or eight huge pieces of firework, which, set off in unison with the concluding strain of the music, announce the finish. The ring breaks up into tossing fragments, or momentary smaller circles, each with some panting heroine of the dance for its centre; the storm of voices becomes a harsh rattle, with here and there loud, unintelligible cries, and one living wave rolls back into the *café* for the parting glass, while another moves toward the gates. There is a sudden commotion which arrests both, and Charley and Somers, who are in the latter, face about in their places. A splendid girl, whose crimson cheeks and dark hair proclaim her Gallic blood, has snatched a violin from the orchestra and, mounted on a beer-table, draws a long note; the cheer that follows holds the outgoing crowd. It is some minutes before the husky "bravos" cease, — a period which the fair performer vainly endeavors to shorten by shaking the unhappy instrument at her audience, and stamping her little feet. Then she begins cleverly enough, and plays half a dozen bars of the "Gendarme Duet" from *Geneviève de Brabant;* the multitude catch the air and burst into an accompanying chorus, which is a very tempest of sound. There is a move onward again towards the gate, accelerated by some unseen manipulation of the gas-pipes, which shrouds half the garden in instantaneous darkness. Simultaneously a quick stroke from behind brings Charley's hat down upon his nose with a crash, and he hears a shout of triumph, a very silvery shout, in his rear. Struggling out of his hat, he tries to look about, but Somers, who is laughing like a Titan and holding his own castor in his hand, gathers the young man's arm in his own and hurries him along.

"No safety now, but in flight, Charley! Egad! I never saw Mabille so furious. It 's 'kingdom for a horse,' with us."

They made their way almost by force through the dense crowd, Somers's laughing face disarming all resentment at their vigorous progress. Half-way out Charley saw his Scotch tourist wedged in among a dozen uproarious revellers, his face inflamed, and every hair of his beard bristling with wrath, but utterly helpless to extricate himself except as the passage of the crowd would ultimately permit him. Charley was still laughing at the memory of the contemplative Highlander as they jumped into a cab and sped away from the entrance between double lines of similar vehicles, which seemed to be interminable.

"Talk of squeezes!" said Somers, who had readjusted his hat and was biting a cigar, "saw you ever one like that? And your hat? A case for Maréchal in the morning, I fancy. If it 's any consolation for you, I can tell you that the mischief was done by a lace parasol in as pretty a

hand as can be found in Paris. It 's all thrown in, you know, at Mabille. There 's not a whole hat on the ground by this time. Stop at the corner, *cocher*, while I get a light."

"But who smashed *my* hat?" asked Charley, as Somers put fire to his cigar. Charley was thinking of the pretty hand.

"Ah!" replied Somers, deliberately, and between long puffs of his weed, — his thoughts were busy too at the moment, — "you would hardly care to know, at least not now. When you do, you may. But what did you think of the affair? How did it strike you in its grand entireness?"

Charley never thought of resenting the rather dictatorial manner of his friend, which was worn with so much grace that it was scarcely felt. He forgot the parasol for the moment, and went back to the previous scenes.

"I could hardly express my opinion," he replied. "I never saw anything like it before, or formed any conception of it."

"You should see a *bal d'opera*," said Somers, who always had the superlative in reserve; "you *will* see one, probably."

"Most likely; in the winter, I suppose."

"Yes, after New Year. — *Voilà!* the Boulevard; *now* you might ask, 'When does Paris sleep?' It 's past one o'clock, and look at the walks!"

They had entered the Italians by the Rue Luxembourg, and the effect was indeed startling, as the brilliant line of *cafés* with their millions of lights, and the undiminished tide of humanity rolling and swelling about them, came into sudden view. They got out at the Grand Hotel, dismissed their *panier*, and sauntered with the current to the next corner, where, at Somers's suggestion, they went across to the Helder for a *rognon broché*.

"One must feed the fires, you know; and, in fact, supper at two o'clock is the most natural thing possible at Paris, untimely as it might seem anywhere else. Besides, the last scene of this 'strange, eventful' comedy is enacted in these and other popular coffee-rooms, and remains to be seen."

Charley was nothing loath, to tell the truth, and the broiled kidneys, washed down with warm Bordeaux, were delicious. The retreating army of Mabille arrived, too, in rapid detachments, and the pretty rooms assumed the liveliest possible appearance; everybody was hungry, and a score of nimble waiters ran breathless races to and fro. How they did eat and drink and laugh! How the lights dazzled, and the corks echoed in cheery chorus to merry voices, until the hours stole away, until the air was heavy with *Laferme* and *Moca*, and the long day of carousal was growing cold and lifeless among the yesterdays!

When our friends emerged upon the Boulevard, daylight was tingeing the sky; and as they walked rather lazily toward the Malesherbes, they met more than one troop of bloused workmen coming up from the river to their early labor, — heavy-browed men, who eyed them askance and muttered in undertones. Charley might have seen in them the night-sleepers he had looked for, though they slept badly in St. Antoine, and had wild dreams, even in those unclouded days.

"Now," cried Somers, as they entered their cosey parlor at last, "*va te coucher!* It is four o'clock; you can have nine hours, and you will need them all."

CHAPTER VIII.

SMILES AND EYES.

It was not without a certain degree of pleasant excitement that Charley, roused by Somers at noon from a wild vision of hobgoblin Cent Gardes and dancing girls, proceeded to make his toilet, under the eye of his Mentor, for the event of the day, the *déjeuner* with the lady of the gray eyes. The charm had worked swiftly and surely on our boy-hero; he had strayed in the enchanted ground, where the spell of the glowing present shaded the past and masked the years to come; he wandered in the rose-twined paths in ecstasy, unconscious that they too, like the old Cretan serpentine, led to no end and afforded no retreat. Few men could breathe freely the Paris atmosphere of those days without imbibing something of the subtle poison, and sharing in some measure the intoxication of the time; and Charley was not one to resist or analyze the magic influence. Why should he, indeed? Why question the nature of the charm which made time so swift and sweet, and life so lovely, when one is young and the blood is warm, with all those sober years yet to come, in which, if need be, one may make amends for the follies of his youth, and be blessed after the manner of the world? The vexed problem of an exhausted civilization or the inexorable logic of antecedents were not likely to disturb his enjoyment of visible effects. Paris might be, as it was, the fevered brain where the disease of the nation was centred, consuming its victim with hidden fires; to Charley — to any of us, wondering strangers within its gates — it was only gay, brilliant Paris. We might, indeed, recoil at times from the too scorching heat; we might own to a silent relief in the thought that it was not our abiding-place nor yet our country, and we should not have cared to call the men and women we saw there brothers and sisters before the world; still we were not

called on to dream sad dreams of "Greece, Rome, Carthage," in its sunny streets, or con the melancholy lesson of national decay. And we did not, — did we, sir? Not we; though you, as representing the peculiarly rigid community of Churchtown, *might* have done so with some propriety. But then — you know how it was!

I remember standing once before that strangely suggestive painting of Couture's in the gallery of Luxembourg, *Les Romains de la Décadence*. It shows a wild revel of degenerate Romans, who have chosen the very tribune of the Forum for the scene of their debauch, and the groups of wine and drug maddened men and women are drawn with startling power. Those who have seen it will not readily forget it, — the two or three splendid but ruined faces among the women in the foreground, and the delirious agony of one who stands in middle-distance, tearing her hair, with shrieks; the man who clings reeling to a column, holding out his overflowing cup to the stern bust of Cicero, with an idiot's mockery; the crouching slave who pours the crimson Falernian, and casts stealthy glances at the brutes who are yet his masters; and the two sad, thoughtful citizens in humble dress who pause to note the scene.

An intelligent Frenchman was my companion, and observed my interest.

"*More majorum!*" he said, laughing; "but they do it better at ——."

Charley was guilty of some trifling vanities — rather exceptional for him they were — in the process of dressing before alluded to. In fact, the laughing glance that had met his own on the race-ground lingered persistently in his memory, — it was only a part of the Paris spell, perhaps, — and he had a youthful desire to look his best before the unknown. Somers, who was stretched ponderously on a lounge, watched the young man with a curious smile.

"By Jove!" he cried, at length, laughing his musical, contagious laugh, "you surpass the traditions, Charley. We are familiar with the lamb which goes meekly to the sacrifice, but for that which studies the minutiæ of pleasing ornament for the ceremony we are scarcely prepared."

The merry Colossus, however, was well pleased with his charge. If a third party had been on the scene, and a commentary possible, his thought would have been expressed in the words, "Handsome dog, is n't he?" As it was, his unspoken reflection took another form, and an inspiration precisely identical with that which had given him a little shock the day previous at Longchamps led to the reiteration of the thought, "That *would* be a 'go'!"

If I have failed critically to describe my hero in any foregoing page, the failure is due to my confidence that my amiable reader would never suspect me of introducing in that capacity any other than a "handsome dog," as described by Monsieur Somers. I leave that dangerous innovation to writers of a bolder school than mine, especially as I am dealing with certain ingredients of fact; and I can satisfactorily assure the reader that Charley richly deserved the encomium bestowed by his friend. Not so bad a one, indeed, after all; for among the millions of dogs, as well as men, we all know how few are "handsome"! The "Man in the Club Window," who, with true English acumen, puts the whole world in the crucible of Pall Mall, would have said of young Wales, "There 's a fine specimen of your American; pity he will not wear his beard!" And the Ladies of the Lake, the winsome naiads of the Bois, and no bad judges, would have cried with one voice, "My God! what eyes! what *petits* pretty feet! *c'est un Rassigniac!*"

As he stood at last completely arrayed, and lighted cigar number one for the day, he might have been photographed as a man of rather more than medium height, slight without being slim, with the straight, downward lines in trunk and limb of the immortal Archer in the Belvedere Court. Short, curling, dark brown hair fell over a low, wide forehead, below which the big brown eyes slept, like unfanned fires, under the womanish lashes. A luxuriant mustache hid the rather full mouth, — the only positively faulty feature he had. The nose was straight and well defined, — the rarest beauty, I fancy, in the human physiognomy. One found a little unsuspected squareness in the chin and jaw, but the neck below was full and round like a woman's, and displayed as it was by the low, broad collar of the day, dipping in front to the bone, gave him something of a softer feminine look. His dress required no criticism; Somers admitted as much in his heart, and was silent.

"What then is the hour prescribed for these afternoon 'breakfasts'?" asked Charley, spinning a ring of smoke before him as he spoke.

"We are expected at two o'clock. You must forswear your transatlantic measurements of time, Charley, with us. I don't know what they are; something like our English divisions, probably, which I have forgotten. In Paris life never begins before the meridian hour, and takes its repose when it likes. You laugh at the epidemic prevalence of clocks; but it is just because their office is ignored that they are tolerated in such profusion. There are only two events in the daily revolution of a Parisian which make it necessary to consult a timepiece, — his dinner and the rendezvous."

The speaker brought himself to a sitting posture as he spoke, and consulted his own watch.

"Is this a dinner then, or a 'rendezvous,' my noble Frenchman?" asked Charley, with a puff and a smile.

"*Ma foi*, Charles!" cried Somers, rising, "I venture no guess. I can read neither stars nor women, who are equally beyond our mortal ken. We are favored souls; that 's all I know, and, like discreet persons as we are, let us accept the good fortune without questioning the eyeless deity, — a clear case of 'no talking' to the genius of the wheel, eh! *Allons!* I want to hear how our new *coupé* strikes you. I have n't seen it, but I left it to Vernay, and he does nothing badly."

The vehicle was at its post, — a natty affair in aristocratic green, with a smart, handsome cob and a well-fed Jehu, all smiles, drab cloth, and gilt buttons. Somers was pleased: "Neat, is n't it? Cinderella's pumpkin reduced to the modest requirements of two quiet young men. *Cocher* is a jewel. M'sieur Stokes, is it not?"

"Non, Monsieur, je me nomme Gabriel."

"Bah! it 's out of all propriety; we want the affair of the horse, *horsy*. Observe, my good man, that you are hereafter 'Stokes,' and nothing but 'Stokes,' and that we take the curb for nobody."

It is to be doubted if the personage in drab entirely relished the summary metamorphosis of his cognomen; but he closed the door with a gay smile, and, in obedience to Somers's instructions, whirled them across to the precincts of Monceaux, drawing up at the closed *porte-cochère* of a large residence in the Avenue de la Reine Hortense. Somers dismissed the *coupé* and led the way through a flowery court to a door where they were ceremoniously received by a servant in livery, and conducted to a luxurious reception-room opening upon an enclosed garden, and breezy with perfume. Charley was in considerable bewilderment, from which he was aroused on the instant by Somers, and presented with some formality to a lady of rather more than middle age, but of aristocratic demeanor, who had entered immediately after themselves. She acknowledged Charley's low bow with much grace, and launched at once into that easy flow of words which is the unfailing resource of the Frenchwoman at all times and in all circumstances. She was delighted to know Monsieur Wales, both as a friend of Monsieur Somers and as a representative of the great country beyond the sea. She cherished a profound interest in *l'Amérique*. She had an ancient relative, *en effet*, since dead, who had performed prodigies of valor under the General Lafayette against the negroes *en Brésil*, was it not? And she had devoured with ecstasy in earlier days those charming legends of *Coupaire* and *ce charmant Monsieur Gulli-vaire*. Would the gentlemen sit; and how, monsieur, had he found it, the Paris? Madame la Baronne had run away for one little moment; she goes to come immediately.

And on the word the lady entered, coming in with a little stumble and a peal of laughter as a microscopic terrier, victim of unlucky chance, darted with a yelp from his hiding-place in the rug of foaming llama, where her foot had caught him. Charley came to his feet half dazed, preserving just sufficient self-possession to repeat his deep obeisance as Somers's voice fell on his ear.

"Madame la Baronne, *permettez;* Monsieur Charles Wales; *voici vos ordres obéis!*"

"C'est bien fait, — merci."

In this instant of by-play Charley stood voiceless, an amusing mixture of grace and *gaucherie*, with his gaze fixed on the hostess. The recollection of the grand eyes at Longchamps, lingering as it was, had scarcely prepared him for the magnificent woman who now smiled before him. Her dress was an exquisite morning *négligé* of some misty material which melted into a foam of lace about her neck and shoulders, and fell in soft, airy folds along her form, like a tissue of snow, shortened in front, so that the tiny slippers with their square buckles of gold peeped out as she walked. Masses of dark hair were gathered carelessly in a great knot at the back of her head, from which a shower of curls fell far below her shoulders, kept in place apparently by a mimic dagger with a diamond hilt. It was the only ornament she wore; there was not so much as a ring upon the hand she extended with a winning smile to Charley, as she glided across to him, a perfect girl-goddess in her fresh and rosy loveliness. He took it awkwardly, and was making a desperate struggle to frame an appropriate sentence in French, when she spoke to him, with a divining look, in English pure as his own.

"I am most happy to meet you, Mr. Wales, and you are very good to come. That naughty Hercules! It was just an accident that I learned he had a friend come from the end of the world to see our beautiful Paris, and obtained the privilege of contributing my mite to make it pleasant for you. He knows that his friends are mine. You are quite in disgrace, indeed you are, Monsieur Somers," she continued, and added mischievously, in a lower tone, "and I turn you bodily over to the tender mercies of Mamma Grandoie."

"But, Madame, I do assure you — "

"Silence" she cried, with a pretty, tragical stamp, "assure me nothing. Go and do your penance!"

She broke into a little silvery laugh as the fine Bohemian moved away disconsolate towards the Ægis. "*Le pauvre bon homme!* But you are not long in Paris, Mr. Wales?"

"I arrived but four days since."

"And you like it?" with a pretty elevation of her eyebrows.

Charley was recovering, and he replied that he had found it the "most delightful spot on earth."

She looked innocently interested. "It seems very popular with your countrymen, of whom we see so many and meet so few. Is it not absurd that you are really the first American I have ever met in my house? I have many English friends, however. Tell me, is it true that you say in America, 'We shall go to Paris when we die'?"

"If we are good, it is the hope of our lives, madame; I am only just learning how happy a one it is; but — do people die here?"

"*Malheureusement!* I believe so; and you are here since four days only" (the home-idiom, which never entirely quits the French tongue made her English very piquant). "I must suspect you have been fortunate in discovering attractions."

"Madame suspects with reason," said Charley, bowing; the little glimmer of merriment in her eyes made him bolder, and he added, "I am only puzzled to understand in what unhappy atmosphere I have heretofore existed."

She looked comically sympathetic, but smiled incredulously.

"*Was* it so bad? but then, Mr. Wales, at your years much can be done to repair the losses of a previously dull life. Paris will do you good."

Heaven knows what foolish thing Charley had on his tongue to say, but at that moment a grave functionary opened and shut himself twice at the door and then announced the *déjeuner*. Charley gave his arm to the Baronne, and they proceeded to the breakfast-room, followed by the others. The meal, perfect in its details and delightful beyond words in its easy familiarity, was a revelation to Charley; one does not always discover in our home-land that she, the woman who gives a grace and smoothness to the rough surface of our lives, may even extend her influence to the ceremony of eating, and rob that exercise of what the fastidious are sometimes fain to term its "vulgarity." But the Baronne in her place as hostess was at once the beaming woman and the watchful dispenser of her bounty; a sprite, all wit and smiles, and yet a *convive* with whom the art of eating was to eat, and eat freely. Charley first wondered and then admired as, perhaps, he had never before admired a woman.

"I will not have you slight my wine, Mr. Wales, it is too good to be neglected," said the Baronne severely, as Charley, like the barbarian he was, ignored the brimming glass by his plate.

"Your pardon, madame, and your health, if you will permit me. It is the elixir of the gods," he added, recovering his wits under the inspiration of the draught.

"*Bon!* what is the Olympian judgment, Monsieur Hercules?" cried the lady, laughing.

"Apollo has said it, madame," replied Somers; "*moi*, I have had the blessed privilege of former acquaintance with it, and I drink in tears."

"*Comment cela?* tears!"

"Ay! that I must needs ever drink any other. My dear Madame Grandoie," he continued, turning to his *vis-à-vis* with a comic solemnity which sent the Baronne into a spasm of suppressed merriment, "let me not be outdone by my chivalrous friend. Madame, your good and continued health. May you long rejoice in the possession of those graces which win all hearts and brighten the existence of all about you!"

Madame acknowledged very graciously what, being delivered in English, she had very imperfectly understood.

"Poor *maman* Grandoie," said the Baronne, in an undertone to Charley, "she always accepts his nonsense so soberly. But you have nothing to eat! a bit of this *pâté*, will you not? Robert, *servez ceci à monsieur.*" But do you not speak French, Mr. Wales?"

"*Sans façon*, madame, as I was unhappy enough to treat your wine," replied Charley, in that tongue.

"*Mais!* — why, that is excellent; and all this time you have made me talk in my poor English!"

"Your English is perfect, madame, as I am sure is everything you do!"

"Ah, but you should always use the French, Monsieur Wales," she returned with an arch smile.

"Why, pray?"

"Because it is the language of compliment, *par excellence*. Monsieur Somers," she continued, severely, "why did you not tell me that Mr. Wales spoke French — *méchant!*"

"*Digne femme!* I forgot that trifle. But I told you he was a prodigy, and, for aught I know, he speaks all the known tongues. In his country they do everything on that magnificent scale. I have heard the infants —"

"Strangle the serpents in their cradles; *n'est ce pas, mon Hercule?* But the American women are very lovely, are they not, Monsieur Wales?"

For his life Charley could not repress a flush, which the Baronne noted with an arch smile. Somers also saw it, and came to the rescue.

"Ah! madame, permit me to shelter the modesty of my friend. With the sole exceptions of yourself and Madame Grandoie, the American women are the loveliest in the world. It is the verdict of the nations."

"Then we poor daughters of France can hold but a low rank among the attractions of Paris in your esteem, Mr. Wales," said the hostess, rather demurely.

"Madame," returned Charley, who had regained his self-possession with the unobserved aid of a glass of wine, "Monsieur Somers deals with a popular but flattering fiction. I, who am an American, have only learned at Paris what beauty in a woman may be!"

Somers experienced a wild desire to whistle, but took his wine instead, and glanced furtively at the depleted bottle at Charley's side. The latter, as it may be inferred, was unaware what he was drinking. Somers could have given him name and date for a rare vintage of the Gironde, of which every drop was costly as a jewel; he only knew it was some blood-warming, spirit-stirring draught which filled his veins with an unwonted fire and inspired a ready gayety which preserved him from any further lapses into confusion. The Baronne experienced the force of this change, when, after a merry interlude in which her woman's wit flashed ceaseless repartee to Somers's ever-amusing *bavardage*, while it held Charley in wondering admiration, and even elicited some mild scintillations from Madame Grandoie, she returned strategetically to the charge, and asked him suddenly, with laughing eyes, "And is there no Ænone mourning her runaway Paris on some hill in the sunset land?" for Charley, with unblushing impudence and a bow worthy of D'Orsay himself, replied, "Madame, we feel that Paris could have had no love before Helen." And the lively Baronne was herself nonplussed for the moment by the quick retort and the big lion's-eyes looking full in her own.

When the gentlemen came away some time later, Somers seized an instant to speak to the Baronne.

"Et l'enfant?" he asked.

"Il est gentil, l'enfant, mon Hercule."

She had this day a thousand little pressing cares of preparation for departure from town, but she seemed to forget them at that moment. She stood thoughtfully by the open window of the drawing-room after her guests had gone, forgetting even to tantalize the mite of a terrier who hovered about her feet, more alarmed than gratified by her unusual forbearance. Madame Grandoie looked in and exclaimed, "*Que fais-toi?* The landau is waiting, *ma chérie*, and you are not even dressed."

"I am coming," she answered, turning with an absent air. Passing the piano, she paused, and presently pulled out one of the sheets of music; from a box of crayons on a side table she selected one with which she dashed off, skilfully and rapidly, a cartoon of a male head, short close-curling hair, broad forehead, great shaded eyes, drooping mustache, with straggling ends, and the full, square chin, — Charley Wales for a ducat, as the whole Mayflower Club could have sworn. The portrait finished, she studied it attentively; one could have seen the woman's divining, penetrating instinct all aflame in the eyes which strove to read the hidden meaning of that pictured face. It read *too well*, — the frank, smiling eyes, the manly lines of brow and jaw, with a strange softness irradiating all. Men wore such faces, she had seen them; but their hearts — ? No, they are only masks, one and all of them!

The bewildered Grandoie reappeared at the door.

"*Mais, voyons! petite*, it is Henriette and Frederick and the *pedicure*, and all the world *qui t'attends toujours!*"

"*Bon!* I fly, *ma vieille.*"

It was not often that this last expression of endearment fell on the good woman's ears; when it did she was wont to retreat in confusion and seek refuge in her own apartment, where she would bestow a furtive glance upon herself in the mirror and shed a few easy tears. She did as much on this occasion, while the Baronne, pausing to take a farewell look at her *croquis*, put it carefully among the sheets of music, and went off to Henriette, and *pedicure*, and "all the world."

Meantime our Charley, left to himself on the crowded walk of the Champs Elysées by Somers, who had to run away to settling day at the club, was weakly following the suggestion of that worthy to "take a stroll and see the promenade in its expiring glory; for you know," he had added, "the court goes to St. Cloud on Wednesday, and Paris will be deserted simultaneously by the entire *monde*." But though the afternoon tide was at its full, Charley wandered absently along, seeing only the one face with its ever-laughing, ever-unfathomable eyes, the long soft tresses, and the white shoulders under the spray of lace. He trod on a dozen dresses and made as many unintelligible apologies, after which he became suddenly aware that he was contributing an immense amount of amusement to a host of promenaders, and roused himself sufficiently to jump into a cab and effect his escape to the Malesherbes. Here he flung himself royally on a sofa, and experienced something like surprise in the reflection that this was absolutely the first moment of restful solitude he had

had since his arrival at Paris, — the first respite in the whirl of that magic life into which he had made so sudden an entrance. A season of thoughtfulness came with it, and, going to the secretary, he hunted out an unfinished letter from among a mass of papers tossed carelessly therein. He set out conscientiously to read it, having forgotten its contents, but he found the task unaccountably tiresome, and after a moment's hesitation he added a few hurried lines to the sheet, closed and sealed it, and was scrawling the superscription with a guilty, conscience-stricken look, when the door flew open with a crash, and Somers came in. He had just time to toss the letter in a drawer, and I may as well sketch its subsequent history. The amiable Somers found it there some months later, and read the address with elevated eyebrows and shrugged shoulders, after which he enclosed it dutifully to Mr. Richard Huntley at New York, "to be handed by him to the interesting 'addressed,' whom, no doubt, he had the happiness to possess on his list of acquaintances." Whereat Mr. Huntley d—d Mr. Somers's "impudence," but was nevertheless glad to possess the enclosure.

"Ah!" cried the new-comer, "here you are. The vulgar world of the Champs had no charms for you after the feast *chez* the goddess supreme, — eh? You have not told me what you think of her, by the way."

"I should think there could be only one opinion," said Charley, rather coolly; somehow Somers's light speech grated on his nerves at the moment.

"No more there can, my dear boy," continued Somers, detecting instantly his friend's irritation, and speaking in a warm but sober tone, "especially when she beams and radiates as she did to-day. It may sound foolish, but you were favored, Charley. I have seen her an icicle to the best of them. She 's an enigma, is Nina Choisy, but as good as gold."

"Nina Choisy?"

"Yes, when we dare be so familiar, far away, you know. She is 'la Baronne Choisy' to the grand world. Did I not tell you her name?"

"No, and I wondered —"

"And wondered at my privileged familiarity, too, probably. Well, she and my youngest sister were twins in affection at Madame Gaspard's *pension* here in Paris. I made the most of their friendship, and she is wonderfully good to me. I have been *mon Hercule* some years now, and there is n't a man in Paris who would n't give his head for my place in her favor. I don't mind telling you that I have been hopelessly in love with her since the first hour I saw her," continued Somers, lighting a cherished pipe; "bad case of the unrequited, *mais, que voulez-vous?*" And the giant's shrug was a magnified but ridiculously faithful copy of the grimace with which every born Frenchman accompanies that favorite phrase. "Ned Somers shall die, and worms shall eat him, but not for love. Would you believe it, she flung that identical sentiment at me, like another Rosalind, one day when the fever was on me and I attempted the theatrical? I had sat up all night, smoked a pound of *capparal* and drank a gallon of *café noir* to aid the effect. She is good to me, though, and it wakes the chivalric spark. I had an ancestor who was an entire crusade in miniature; his picture hangs in the old hall at home, and they say I am like him. Fancy me in penny-mail and a buskin! Yet am I not warlike? But I would make a Paynim holocaust any day of substituted Frenchmen for Nina Choisy, and I think she knows it."

Charley was pleased and puzzled by this queer mixture of nonsense and feeling. He was beginning to like his great man-mastiff very much, without in any degree penetrating his character. Somers, stretched on a lounge, puffed silently after his speech; and Charley summoned courage to ask what was in effect a foolish question, since its answer was and had been palpable to him. Perhaps he struggled still, or hoped blindly against the truth. "And yet, of course, she is married, is she not?"

Somers drew in his breath at the words, and blew a great white cloud slowly into space before he replied, "Yes, married as they marry in France; married to a shadow whom no one has ever seen, and to some thousands of acres which furnished the hush-money required in such contracts. I am no student of social ethics, Charley, and I am an infant in the moral philosophies; but if there is a character on earth I pity, and for whom I have unquestioning charity, it is for the Frenchwoman who is wedded to a rag of law and a chateau, and buried alive just as she becomes a woman!" Somers checked himself abruptly and sucked his pipe. "We must n't get on that ground here, though, it's a mortal offence in Paris and to Paris," he resumed with new gayety. "Bury the moralities, *mon enfant*, or pack your trunks; it is the philosophy of the time and place!" Whereupon the speaker rose and laid aside the exhausted meerschaum, looked at his watch and yawned like a griffin. "Six o'clock! We will dine late, if you are not otherwise disposed; dress first, and drop in comfortably at the opera after our cigars. Patti's last night, and a great squeeze. You will see everybody, and get a word with our hostess of the afternoon in her box, though I promise you not without a struggle. She shares with *Diva* the homage of the house."

Charley heard the proposition with a thrill of delight which he neither paused to analyze nor struggled to repress. He ran away to his room, and was dressed a full half-hour before his companion, who smiled beneath a mask of soap-foam, when, suspending his ablutions for an instant, he turned to view the young man radiant in evening dress.

"Egad! you 'll excuse me, but you are rather magnificent," spluttered Somers. To himself, later, screened in a towel that would have served for a bedspread, he muttered, "Deuced little of the Puritan instinct in *him!*" Once that afternoon the thought had made him uneasy, but he reasoned well and watched closely, did Monsieur Somers, and his conclusion, as above expressed, was substantially correct. He had little to fear from an obstruction of that character in the development of his plans, — plans that fate was hurrying to sudden consummation. Already he thought he saw the end, and smiled at himself in the glass, and shrugged the elephantine shoulders as he gave his long, soft whiskers a last stroke. "*Mais! ce n'est pas moi!* It was always Dick Huntley's luck. Fortune has ever dealt him trumps, only he *would* play out of rule."

"What did you say?" asked Charley, in all innocence, appearing at the door as if summoned.

"Me? Did I speak? It must have been to myself, unconsciously. 'There are some men so loose of soul,' you know, and I was thinking about Hamilton, ass that he is, backing his scrubs against the French field. It must have cost him a nice penny. Are you ready? *Bon!* speaking of Hamilton, suppose we dine at the Maison Dorée; it will be convenient."

The Italien was thronged as Charley and Somers entered somewhat late in the evening. Our hero had puffed away two cigars very impatiently after their dinner, while the placid Bohemian calmly finished a single one. The latter was not blind to the nervous restlessness of the young man; but he had a lively idea of the crush and heat that awaited them at the opera, and was himself in no haste to face the ordeal. When he did set out, however, it was with his usual vigorous tactics of advance, and in those packed lobbies and passages Charley rather exulted in his irresistible leadership. Isabella, at the feet of her recreant lover, was filling the air with the glorious melody of *Robert, toi que j'aime*, as they pressed through the crowd and caught the glittering spectacle of the house, — wave above wave of rapt faces turned to the stage, with only the soft ripple of myriad fans breaking the charm of absolute immobility. In the tumult of the *entr'acte* they fought their way valiantly to the box of the Baronne. It, too, was thronged with extravagantly dressed men, whose presence was singularly distasteful to Charley, while their number was rather discouraging; but Somers effected access, and Charley followed resolutely on his heels, quite ignorant of the puzzled and curious regards which met him on all sides.

"Ah! *bon soir*, Monsieur Somers, and Mr. Wales, too, — how delightful!" She turned half round, and put out her hand to the dazzled Charley, who took it in its snowy glove almost timidly, and stumbled sadly in his words. Struggle as he would, the old readiness failed him before this woman, and, indeed, the *rencontre* with the rosy deity of the afternoon could scarcely have schooled him for the splendid creature now before him, in the richest of evening dress, with bare, white arms and shoulders, and diamonds flashing from breast and brow, — flashing blindness and delirium to his eye and brain.

"*Mais*, Monsieur le Compte, a thousand pardons! *un si vieux ami* —" It was the Baronne's voice in the sweetest, most beseeching tones; and M. le Compte, who was the happy occupant of the chair behind her, surrendered the same in angry bewilderment to the smiling Charley, who lost no time in taking possession thereof, secretly enchanted to find himself already an "old friend."

M. le Compte withdrew in high dudgeon, followed soon by the others, all equally impressed with the conviction that their presence was no longer necessary to the situation.

"Who is the phenomenon, Count?" asked one.

"*Mille diables!* how should I know!" responded that gentleman — a marvellous *conserve* of sixty summers — with much phlegm.

"O, I beg pardon!" laughed the other; "the grace and readiness with which you gave him your chair led me to suppose —"

"*Bah! c'est trop fort! Sans doute* it is some distinguished relative from the Bas-Rhone districts."

"Very likely — to be sure."

A single shadow clung to the name of Nina Choisy; and, after the manner of their race, these gentlemen consoled their wounded hearts by dwelling on and magnifying it.

Our two friends, remaining masters of the field, settled themselves in the coveted places with perfect contempt of the laws of succession; Somers paying assiduous court to the smiling Grandoie, whose miraculous preservation as displayed in opera costume was the wonder of his soul; Charley leaning over the Baronne and drinking the deep

intoxication of her backward glances, wishing the mimic love-story on the stage might never end. In the pretty, girlish enthusiasm of the Baronne, it is probable there was much of the actress. Somers, who had seen her yawn through the same scene more than once, thought so, but coupled the thought with approval. But upon our worshipping Charley there came no shadow of suspicion; he was insensible even to the most natural consideration that the beauty before him was and could be no other than the schooled woman of the world, to whom that glare of light and luxury, that wonderful music even, and the listening thousands, were things worn and old and lifeless. He never thought of that; but he exulted in the dewy freshness of the beauty before him, and the artless *insouciance* — perfection of art — in manner and word of its possessor. It was this childlike innocence which charmed him, and the charm hid the deception. Poor boy! he worshipped purity and simplicity in a French opera-box! and the Baronne knew it all, and revelled in the knowledge. It was something new to her to see Adonis, fresh from his breezy woods, redolent of wild flowers and a purer air, standing an unsullied knight-errant at her chair; but there was yet a germ in her woman's heart that swelled into delicious life in the presence of this surprise.

It had seemed but a moment to Charley, that sweet dreamy interval of stolen glances and smiles and whispered words, between the rising and falling of the curtain, though it had been a whole, long, fatiguing scene for the matchless Adelina, no doubt. He had sighed unconsciously when the veil of canvas fell, and fancied with a lover's vanity that the Baronne had joined him in that sentimental expression. Certainly she remained pensive and silent while Charley arranged her mantle, which he did with trembling hands. Something of the same feeling seemed to pervade the four as they lingered a few moments in the box, while the multitude poured out in a slow, impeded stream, and Somers broke a profound silence when he spoke.

"Woe is me, Alhama! It is desolating to think that this fairy scene, which in ten minutes will be 'chaos and old night,' is but the epitome of the Paris of to-morrow. The world has packed its trunks and flies with the dawn, like the elfin phalanx. Do you go also to-morrow, Madame la Baronne?"

"I believe so," she replied, listlessly. She stole a glance at Charley as she spoke, and was fairly startled by his changed face. *N'est ce pas, maman?*"

"*Mais oui,*" responded that amiable female with respon-ive melancholy. She measured the march of time too closely not to feel sorrow at the end of another season, but her respect for the conventionalities was superior to every other consideration. "After to-morrow, you know," she said, "Paris will be quite insupportable."

Charley seemed paralyzed; twenty unspeakable things surged to his lips, twenty impracticable schemes flitted through his brain. Going away? to-morrow? where? He would follow her! Then the flame flared out and left a cold gloom. Somers had set the example, and, giving his arm to the Baronne, Charley followed the others into the corridor. Neither spoke; the Baronne was waiting, and Charley could not trust his tongue. At last, as the lights grew dimmer, he managed to ask timidly, "Is it true that you go away to-morrow?"

"*Helas! oui,*" she answered, briefly. She hung rather heavily on his arm, and looked downward persistently, and there was an interval of silence.

"Shall you care — *very* much? you, who have known me but a day!"

The words were almost in the tone of *badinage*, and Charley, who turned to look quickly as he heard them, met a half-sad, half-laughing face. But in her eyes was a deep, serious light, — alert, questioning, intense. Even in the shade he caught it, and it sobered him, checking some heated inspiration of the moment. When he answered, it was soberly, but with undisguised feeling.

"I shall care; I should like to know you better."

"*Bon!*" came the response on the instant; "then I will not go!"

They had reached the portal, and in another minute Charley had handed her into the *coupé*, and stood uncovered at the door. She gave him her hand, just an instant, as he stood there, and spoke quick and low, "*Bon soir, mon ami; à bientôt!*"

Soon! it might as well have been a century of waiting for our Charley, who, planted like a statue, gazed after the disappearing vehicle with his hat in his hand and his heart in his throat. She had called him "her friend," her *ami;* even to Charley's unschooled ears that word was full of meaning.

Mephistopheles on the *trottoir* laughed noiselessly, but immoderately.

"Come, Charley, you go to *enrhumer* yourself, standing there in the 'pose number two.' Aurora will be here with daylight again, and Clitus need not mourn. So come down to vulgar things; I am longing for innumerable *bocks* at Neeser's. *Allons, enfants!* Look at that sergeant! He 'd like me to continue that strain ten words more, and then pounce on me for a mountain of sedition! Shade of Bacchus! what a thirst is mine!"

CHAPTER IX.

MADAME.

THE Baronne Choisy was a star of the first magnitude in the fashionable world of Paris. She was, indeed, more than that; she was a meteor, and since she had first flashed upon the social horizon, two years before, had held a pre-eminent place among the sisterhood of society's queens. The coming of the unknown provincial beauty had been duly heralded by Madame Grandoie, whose acquaintance we have made. This lady was the widow of a dignitary of the last Orleans Court, and a somewhat antique relic of the old aristocracy of the Chaussée d'Antin. She made the most of her not very clear claim of *ancienne noblesse*, and clung to the boards of the social stage with a clever tenacity known only to a Frenchwoman, securing her position by a certain popularity with the younger class, for whom she rendered diplomatic services in a variety of ways; for trustworthy instruments of that character were much in demand in latter-day Paris. The *entrée* of Nina Choisy in the fashionable arena was a godsend to the worthy dame; she was a *soi-disant* relative, and had been requested by the Baronne to take the position of Ægis of the new and elegant hotel in the Avenue de la Reine Hortense. It may be imagined with what ecstatic joy she assented, and how felicitously she trumpeted abroad the intelligence of Nina's coming, weeks before her arrival.

"Such a dear child!" she cried to her first victim, *la Comtesse Brié;* "she is so lovely, and so fine. She was here a long time, you know, at the *pension* Gaspard, and would always escape and come to me, poor child! She could not bear the restraint. Ah! the ingenious illnesses we invented to gain holidays; they were superb. *La pauvre chérie!* Monsieur le Baron, you know, is imbecile, and the poor, dear Colonel, her father, was killed in the hunt. Fancy the life for the darling in that heart-breaking wilderness! Me, I was writing her forever to come to Paris, and *voilà!* she comes. She will capture all the hearts. Ah! *les beaux yeux!* I go to tell Madame, Monsieur le Compte, that she must keep you under the good guard when my ravishing *protégée* arrives!"

Monsieur le Compte laughed lightly, but he had been all ears, and, after seeing Madame Grandoie to her carriage, he sauntered off to the Jockey Club with his news, and retailed the same in epigrammatic style to a circle of acquaintances which fringed an indolent party at *écarté*. "Prodigy *en route* from the districts; projected eclipse of all the fixed stars and movable planets generally in the social world!"

"*Mon Dieu*, Count, — go the Academy with your convulsions of nature, and leave us in peace," cried a player.

"He has pillaged the secrets of the astronomical genius in the Place Vendôme!"

"Spare us the homily of the Pleiades, O Count! the lost, the fallen — "

"Bah! it's only a woman; don't you see?"

"*Tiens!* I thought it was a comet!"

"From where, did you say?"

"'Paris, Lyon et Mediterranée,'" laughed the Count, rallying from the cross-fire his original remark had drawn upon him.

"Bah! the *marrons* are not in season, my good man!"

"*A toute sauce, mon cher*, so the *filet* is prime!"

"Hearken to the beast! I mark the king. You don't tell us who it is."

"Baronne Choisy, — you know the name; owned all Lyons once, and may yet, for aught I know."

"Dead, is n't he, the Baron?" asked some one.

"No, but *un peu près*, I judge, nothing left but his stomach!"

"Great Epicurus! nothing but stomach! Baron Choisy, man blessed of the gods!"

"Are you quite correct in the name, Monsieur le Compte?" inquired a withered, painfully preserved old gent from his chair, — one of those immeasurably antique relics of society which abound in Paris.

"Monsieur l'Ombre, I speak from the cards," responded the Count with a bow, while the whole circle turned with instinctive expectation toward the "shade." Nor did he disappoint them; he filled the office of his class with singular fidelity, and could disinter the buried histories of half the old families of France at reasonable notice. But he chose at the opening to be distressingly succinct. "I knew her as a child; served with her father, Colonel d'Alencourt in Africa — fine man — killed himself hunting two years ago — made an odd marriage — peasant-woman or something — *affaire du cœur* — girl promised to be handsome, but *un peu brute* — after her mother probably."

The listening gentlemen were not to be put off with these *staccato* details.

"How do you say?" asked the Count Brié, drawing nearer, and offering his jewelled snuff-box to the veteran, while the others gathered quietly about, "peasant-woman? a *mésalliance* then?"

Monsieur l'Ombre preserved an exterior of solemn indifference, but was secretly very vain of the attention he received; the *amour propre* of an octogenarian is the essence of his existence in whatever direction it may turn, and the venerable "Jockey's" consisted in delving among the bones of a forgotten past. He dropped his well-

read *Siècle* upon his knees, and snuffed a prodigious amount as he gathered up the fragmentary recollections in his mind.

"Yes," he began, reflectively, "a *mésalliance*, decidedly. It caused some gossip at the time, I remember; but the Colonel had been ten years in the field, and was half forgotten, and he was the last one living of his name. Then his wife died a year after marriage, without any one ever having seen her. I never knew the whole story, but it came about through an accident to the Colonel. He was badly wounded at Mascara, and in trying to reach home got overturned in his *calèche* somewhere on the Camargue above Marseilles, — near Arles, I think; it was a vile road thirty years ago. They had to take him to the nearest house, — he could n't bear removal, — which happened to be a vine-dresser's — "

"Who had a pretty daughter, of course," interrupted Count Brié, "and a woman of Arles, too! *Mon Dieu!* a Lucrèce, I presume, — but to marry her!"

"He did, however," continued the narrator, "after lying three months in the house; said she had saved his life."

"She was well paid; and this was the mother of the notable Baronne?"

"Yes; she died in childbed, I believe, and the Colonel lived a very retired life afterwards on his estate. I saw him once or twice here at Paris latterly; the girl was at Madame Gaspard's."

"So, at the English school! *Voyons*, Dupray," cried the Count, to one of the bystanders, a dark-eyed, handsome man, who was negligently attending the discourse of Monsieur l'Ombre, "you must brush up Bulwer and the Byronic measure, — you know the style! But how came she to marry the man of the stomach?" he continued, turning to L'Ombre; "old too, is n't he?"

"As I am, or nearly. It *was* curious. It was understood she was to marry the son, and Lyons was thunderstruck to learn that she had captured the old man instead."

"The son? not Bête Choisy, who blew out his brains at Baden?"

"The same."

"*Parbleu!* then it was a choice between the imbecile and the fool. I commend her selection!"

"Very good of the young one to take himself out of the way too, so quietly."

"Faugh! what a *gredin* he was! Did you know him? He had spent a million on Baden and *la Joueuse Russe!*"

"Yes, I remember something of him; not a nice party. Come, Count, *cent du picquet* before dinner."

And the circle about Monsieur l'Ombre, having exhausted the oracle, left that venerable soul to solitary meditations. His statements, though meagre, had quite truthfully embodied the history of Nina Choisy, and in their general extent contained all that careless, idle Paris wanted to know. She had had a peasant mother. She was married to an *imbecile*. She was very beautiful and very rich. *Bon!* one might be amused, perhaps, at the Hotel Choisy! Nor does it seem essential that a closer view of her life should be given here. The apology for a woman is not to be sought in the circumstances of her early existence; an indignant world refuses her that plea. And yet it might be told how the motherless girl, endowed with a nature all passion and warmth and sunshine, had stifled in the heavy atmosphere of her home, and lived a childhood of alternate storm and brooding calm; how every sympathetic feeling died out between her and the stern old *militaire*, her father, who, repenting in bitterness his unhappy marriage as he grew older and felt more keenly the whisper of the world and the pride of rank, thought of her only as an alien thing, or a thing, at least, to be smothered quietly into oblivion with all possible speed. He sent her, in his shame, to the English *pension* at Paris, and thereby plunged her into an atmosphere thoroughly unnatural to a French girl, where her associations were with the free daughters of another land and another civilization; where she fed with avidity on the wild romancing of her mates and the ever-abundant, surreptitious literature of the dormitory, and gathered from it revelations of another existence, of a world where there was freedom and sentiment and untrammelled womanhood. Beside that picture of life her own chained and fettered future was a hideous thing, and stirred a wild rebellion in her soul, when, to crown her humiliation, she was hurried from the schoolroom to be married to one she had never seen, of whom, indeed, she had scarcely heard the name. The estates of the Baron Choisy joined those of the D'Alencourts, and there was a certain intimacy between the Colonel and the old noble, albeit the latter, a rigid fanatic in his order, had never ceased to reproach the Compte d'Alencourt for the signal error of his youth; for the Baron, like his neighbor, had an only child, a son, and the union of the families, had it been possible, would have been "so admirable." But to the daughter of the peasant-woman? — a Choisy! Ah, no! and the old soldier could only sit silent in his bitterness. But Choisy *fils*, scion of a line of nobles as he was, was not a character worthy of special admiration. We have heard him called "Beast" in a circle of ordinarily lenient judges, and he fully deserved the name. To what dire extreme he carried his gay career need not be in-

quired; but some grave contingency arose which had the remarkable effect of bringing the old Baron in desperation to the astonished Colonel with a proposal for the immediate alliance of their offspring. The *paysanne-mère* was ignored, nor was the young man's character discussed; only the message went to Paris, and Nina was brought home to take for her husband the Beast. This passage of her life may well be curtained from view; it was such a mad, despairing struggle of the woman's heart as we should only shudder to read of, and we might err in reading it, and pity her. There was no escape; none but the one that even frenzy shrinks from, though she thought of it more than once. But her strength refused it, and she *was* strong. Who knows? The old Roman blood ran in her veins, as it had come down warm and unsullied through the ages to the woman of Arles, — the blood it might be of a Lucretia, as Count Brié had said in jest; burning for good or evil, but burning fierce and strong. Must she wed with this stained brute? There was an alternative, it was not so difficult to secure, — she was so young, so beautiful, so resistless in her intuitive coquetry! With a sort of mad ingenuity she grasped her fate and steeled her heart to the sacrifice, and the world opened its sleepy eyes, and laughed brutally at the diplomacy of the school-girl, when it was known that she had married the old Baron and left the Beast to curse upon the doorstep.

A personage who had been a silent member of the company which surrounded the veracious L'Ombre was especially interested in that gentleman's account of the Baronne Choisy, and afterwards went to considerable trouble among divers old memoranda in the evening seclusion of his own chamber, the result of which investigation was something like a grunt of satisfaction, the indolent extension of two colossal legs over an adjacent chair, and a soliloquy to this effect: "Same party, as I fancied, — Flo's old *amie* at Madame Gaspard's. Nina d'Alencourt, — pretty name! Peasant-mother, humph! — sick man — half of Lyons! — must look in there for old acquaintance, — 'should old acquaintance be forgot?'"

And with these last words feebly indicating a musical intention, our worthy friend, Monsieur Somers, at whom we are taking a glance some two years previous to the date of our story, drowsed off comfortably on his impromptu couch.

Nina Choisy had been married three years when she burst upon the world at Paris. Tragic events had marked the time for her in congenial unison with the angry tempest in her soul. From the very day of his marriage the Baron, like the rash priest of the temple, who wooed the goddess, sank into a mumbling oblivion; the wretched profligate son cut short his career by his own insane hand; and her father, the Colonel, had killed himself in the chase. She was little moved by this series of fatalities. She only breathed more freely after them, and planned a future of her own, hugging each day more passionately the old girl-dream, shapeless, intangible, but living, — a shadow of the ideal. A strange character was formed in this woman, or, better, a character strangely deformed. Crushed, sacrificed as she was, with all the maiden whiteness blotted from her soul; reckless, and ready for any means to gain her end, — that end was still the old, sweet desire of her best days; the haunting vision of a *love*, pure, perfect, stainless, and all her own. She was one of a class; and can we not fancy how Judith and Beatrice and Charlotte Corday would have loved?

Her *entrée* at Paris was a triumph. The gay coterie gathered in idle curiosity admired, wondered, and lingered in a spell. The men found something in her that was not to be explained, but which thrilled and held them captive at her feet; and some, who had built their pretty schemes on the fancied assailability of the provincial wife, were left to puzzle over the well-poised woman of the world, who stepped from the shadows of the distant chateau, like Pallas from the brain of Jove, armed and equipped for the strife. It was an ordeal of fire, raging and fierce, that she had to pass; but she came through it bravely and unscathed, and her first season left her victorious and triumphant, a *reine du monde*, of whom Paris spoke in admiration and, what was rarer, with respect. She formed naturally her circle of chosen friends, and among these figured no less a dignitary than our giant of memoranda and dreams, M. Somers.

I have said that he was a handsome and attractive man, and the reader has, perhaps, divined that he could be pleasant and winning in his way. I may add now that he possessed the additional advantage of good family, and held unquestioned position at Paris as an independent and reputable gentleman. Not a few of his countrymen made their home in the French capital in those days, many of them of high caste, and their society was much courted in that peculiarly mixed aristocracy where the title was not always strengthened with age, or even supported by attest, and where the genuine article had an exaggerated value. Edward Somers, albeit not of actual blue-blood extraction, hailed from an eligible environ of May Fair. His elder brother had been knighted for distinguished services in her Majesty's Parliament, and the family was an old and wealthy one. There were peo-

ple, indeed, of that impracticable class which afflicts all lands and races, who hinted at unpleasant passages in Mr. Somers's life of long anterior date, and the whisper was heard, and perhaps remembered, but had never brought any damage to the subject thereof. Englishmen, visiting Englishmen, as a rule, "did not know" Mr. Somers. "Brother to Sir Robert? Aw! indeed, was not aware Sir Robert had a brother; unfortunate estrangement, perhaps." Whereupon Mr. Edward would be dropped with no particular damage to himself. He was not extravagant in his living, and made no debts, at least none that could be talked about, and he was very clever in sporting matters, and immensely popular at the Jockey Club. He was scarcely less popular in the social world, where there lacked no smiles for the splendid *lion d'Angleterre*, as he was not unfrequently called; and he had experienced no difficulty in obtaining the *entrée* at the Hotel Choisy.

For the rest, it would scarcely have been our Monsieur Somers had he failed to push his way into pleasant friendliness with the Baronne. Of course, she "remembered the darling Florence, — was she married? — and she was so pleased to know her brother; now that she recalled his sister's face more clearly, there was much resemblance." And he was charmed, as all had been before him, and as all continued to be who came after. He was not without certain pretensions of his own as a man of conquests, moreover, and in his secret soul there had ever lingered a consoling faith in events which were, some bright day, destined to conduct his aimless bark into a haven of affluence and ease. More than once had the possible agent of this delightful consummation taken shape in the person of some new fair one dawning on the horizon of his acquaintance; and though doomed to repeated disappointment, the hope burned brightly to the last upon the altar of his heart. It blazed into a more brilliant glow than ever when he encountered the Baronne, but never was the illusion so short-lived; his passion subsided instantly again to the sober warmth of trust and expectation: for he was very wise and quick-sighted, was Edward Somers, possessing an alert faculty under the free and lightsome exterior that the world recked not of, and his wisdom lent him eyes. He was very devoted to the Baronne, and she grew to like him immensely, called him her *Hercule soumis*, and enrolled him among the privileged souls who enjoyed a certain intimacy at the now famous hotel in the Avenue de la Reine Hortense.

Once, at one of those delightful *déjeuners intimes* at which Somers was a favored participator, there occurred an incident. The occasion was marked by the introduction of a new assailant upon the arena where so many had contested for the high prize of the Baronne's smiles. This was a nobleman of certain celebrity; they called him Camours at the clubs, though we have heard him addressed by his correct name by Count Brié, some pages back. He came at the eleventh hour, like the tardy knight in romance who enters the lists when the reader's patience is at the ebb; he was the last of the "irresistibles," and Somers watched the encounter closely. He saw the Baronne's eye take rapid measure of the man; it was just one quick, flashing glance, questioning, critical, infallible; but what another might not have seen Somers saw, a vague, far-away shade of expectancy, almost of longing, followed by the droop of disappointment, — the look of one who seeks a lost face in a throng of faces and cannot find it. Scores, almost hundreds of times, he had caught that momentary expression; he had even seen it pass over her face at his own presentation to her, and in time he had mastered the thought beneath it.

He was standing by her alone later that morning, when the party, which was quite numerous, had returned to the drawing-room. They were at an open window, where the early roses strayed in at their feet, and she was teasing the miniature terrier, pushing him in among the thorns as often as he struggled out in abject submission to lick the tiny foot that wrought his woes. There had been a season of silence, broken only by her fits of merry laughter at the unhappy dog, until Somers spoke in a low, peculiar tone, '*Another, — and not he!*" The little foot paused half-way in its campaign against the terrier, and she looked up, puzzled and startled, with the faintest possible flush on her face; the big, blue eyes, half sad, half smiling, met her own, and he added in the same tone, "*Mais enfin! courage!* He is in the world, and he will come!"

She looked away into the garden an instant, and felt how little she knew this great woman-faced man with his surface-manner of unconscious *bonhomie* and all that subtlety below. But she liked him; there was such an atmosphere of strength and protection about him, and she hoped he could be good as she believed him to be a gentleman; and somehow, it disturbed her very little to find he had read her secret. The hesitation was only momentary; she caught his hand and pressed it, and smiled in his eyes, like a trusting girl. How marvellously young she kept that face!

"*Allons! mon ami*, we shall always be such good friends, — *n'est ce pas?*"

Then she ran away and joined her company, while the man, who of all men in Paris at that moment was the best satisfied with himself, remained at the window and

smiled on the vernal scene without. It may be added that his conduct that evening in the privacy of his chamber was the reverse of that which we noted on a previous somnolent occasion; it verged, in fact, on the acrobatic, — so closely, indeed, that a gentleman of sedate and studious turn of mind, who occupied apartments directly below those of Mr. Somers, abandoned the midnight lamp in despair, and, being of disposition averse to complaint, sought, rather, to escape the infliction by a promenade upon the Boulevards at an hour when for gentlemen of sedate and respectable character that glittering thoroughfare was one environed by manifold perils.

From that day it was noticed that the Baronne accorded a certain delicate familiarity to her blond Hercules, who knew its value and guarded it accordingly; and it was no detriment to Monsieur Somers in his world of acquaintance to have gained the recognized title to something like a brotherly privilege at the Hotel Choisy.

Nina's second season was, if possible, more brilliant than her first; she was more fascinating, lovelier, and more unapproachable than before: and the men raved, while the women applauded, and each with an equal, though secret bitterness. Somers was glorified, and held his post with the spotless fidelity of the Pompeiian, revelling in his privileges, and watching anxiously and uneasily for that "coming man." But the great myth, the ideal, came not; and while our noble guardsman rejoiced, Nina, in her soul, lost much of the wild, unspoken hope which had so long animated and sustained her. She grew very weary with the long winter of ceaseless and unmeaning gayety, and hailed the semi-repose of the Lenten days with a sigh of relief. She had coveted this restless life, not so much for any charm of its own, but as the vantage-ground whereon her life-scheme might achieve its dear result. She met its perils, breathed its poisons, and shared its struggles with indifference; but it wearied her in the end, and it had bruised her sometimes so that now she loved it not, and reproached it for the disappointments it had borne her. The color was slowly fading, too, from that old, never-to-be-realized dream.

"Dites-moi, Hercule," she cried, leaning her chin on her hands and looking vexed, half desperate, but more beautiful in her impatient *abandon* than ever a graceless daughter of earth had looked before; "ou donc est mon Ulysse?"

Somers was only human; with all his easy control he was often enough near playing the fool with this siren, and he was never nearer than on this occasion. But he checked himself bravely, and answered in mock-melancholy, "*Helas!* madame, if it is to be Ulysses! The poor man was twenty years *en route!*"

"*Mon Dieu! Merci — la pauvre* Penelope! Me, I abandon Ulysses; he is magnificent, *mais il voyage si doucement!*"

The spring passed away, and Nina still lingered at Paris. Never had she so dreaded and shrunk from the return to the chateau, and there were not lacking pleading voices to persuade her to remain in the gay city. So she stayed even to the close, fixing her departure for the day following the *Grand Prix*. It was almost by accident that she had done this, as it was by accident that from her carriage she had noted the new face by Somers's shoulder, and flashed surprise and confusion on it with her wonderful gray eyes. It had not precisely charmed her on the spot, this young handsome face of our Charley; but she liked it, and found time, amid all the demands upon her attention, to give the order to Somers that we heard.

When she had seen him, looked him through and through, and read him as she could so easily do, she liked him better. Indeed, the fever that possessed the young man called forth something like an answering flush in the woman's heart; it had stolen in silently and insidiously, and she never knew it till it was there. *Then* she grasped the thought, and hugged it with the first strength of a passion that might grow into delirium. He was only a boy; there were moments when she would have called him a child; but there was the unbroken bloom of his young manhood upon him, cool and fresh as water from the spring to her thirsting heart. It was very sweet to turn from that exotic life with its heated, arid glow and sickly odors, its false flowers and falser faces, and revel in the new, the almost unknown, atmosphere that clung about his glorious youth, to read truth and feeling undisguised in his face, to see a first strong passion gathering in the lion's eyes! Was it her dream? She could not remember what she had dreamed; she was conscious only of the long-coming fire in her blood, and the tardy illumination of that shaded corner of her heart, and she was supremely content.

And he had known her, she had known him, but a day!

CHAPTER X.

"LIÉ."

CALLING at his banker's on the morning after the opera, Charley found a packet of letters from home, and among them one from his cousin, which, glancing at it with a

sick, guilty feeling in his heart, he put away unopened in his pocket. As if to neutralize the twinge of conscience the sight of the one missive had occasioned, there was another from Huntley full of congenial suggestions and agreeable thoughts. The broker had calculated nicely on reaching Charley in this letter just when the glamour of Paris life had fallen upon the young man, and his epistle was a very skilful "Tally ho!" indeed: "I shall be disgusted with you if you come home having done Paris after the manner of a summer tourist whose impressions are embodied in a cab-ride to the Bois, a *fête* night at Mabille, and the daily rubbish of a *table d'hôte*. Your opportunities are better (especially if, as I trust is the case, you have looked up Ned Somers and put yourself under his wing), and you are sufficiently intelligent to know what I nevertheless take the liberty to tell you, that the Paris of to-day is unique in our age, that you enter its gates to behold the marvel of civilization where the cream of the earth is gathered and made contributive to every department of its luxurious life. The ebb is inevitable; what you see, the man of twenty, perhaps ten, years hence will only read of. *Carpe diem!* and don't let those sudden scruples I gather from your last — and which as a friend and an 'older soldier' I am going to discuss with you in their turn — prevent you from looking through Paris to the bone. Your wise resolves will keep to bring home, and they will only be dead weight to you there," — and so forth, through eight pages. If Mr. Huntley had known how beautifully *en train* in the precise direction of his, Mr. Huntley's, wishes these lines would find our Charley, it is probable he would have spared himself the trouble of constructing the elaborate exhortation of which I have given a sample; but the message still operated favorably to the writer's general plans, since it soothed a rising compunction or two which the simple exterior of another letter had stirred, and was altogether a vehicle of encouragement and cheer. It was read word for word on its receipt, and afterwards reproduced at breakfast and reread in part to Somers with continued enjoyment, that gentleman sharing the same with *éclat*. He too, singular to note, had received a letter by the same mail from the same individual, but he did not think it necessary to mention the fact.

The gentlemen made their "call of digestion" in the afternoon at the Hotel Choisy. The Baronne was holding her farewell *levée*, and all the world, migratory and otherwise, was there making its adieus. The *salon* was a tumult of richly dressed people, and Charley felt rather overpowered by his surroundings. Indeed, after the first inspiriting impulse which ushered him bravely and even confidently into the room, he experienced a sombre reaction, a depressing sense of his own insignificance, which was not lessened when he caught sight of Nina afar off, splendid in flashing silk and serpentine train, the queenly ruler of all this glittering throng. He had lost Somers, and in his embarrassment was taking the wall, when the Baronne, whose quick eye had caught the tall figure soon enough, made her way to him and warmed his heart with her rare smile. She was so grand, so gloriously beautiful, so Juno-like in her robes of state and among her subjects, that poor Charley faltered again, as it seemed his fate ever to do in these first moments of their meetings. She could only stay a moment, and said so, adding, "It is very good of you to come with all these *dear* friends who are here to say farewell before I go. What a delightfully large number I have, have n't I?"

Charley looked alarmed at the word "go," but the glance, half serious, half mischievous, reassured him.

"There, I can't stay," she continued, quickly; "but remember, I shall lose my character for remaining a day beyond the prescribed limits at Paris; how am I to be consoled in my solitude, monsieur?"

Charley's heart leaped.

"May I — shall I come?" he asked excitedly, while the Baronne glanced about to see if his dramatic *ensemble* had drawn upon him curious scrutiny. Then she made just the faintest little *moue* at him; she was Juno no longer, only the girl goddess of that first memorable afternoon. "Shall you come?" the *moue* meant; "do I not stay for you? Cruel!"

Then she laughed a low musical laugh like some flitting bird's song, and glided away; paused, and turned back an instant to him still standing mute and transfixed. She looked just a trifle malicious.

"*Mais*, Monsieur Wales, would you not like to know some of these beautiful ladies?"

The look of dismay on Charley's face provoked a second silver laugh; then she left him. The world surged between them, while Charley lingered a moment, following her with his eyes, and feeling like a king amid the hosts he had thought so formidable a little time before. Certain grand dames noted the eyes with high approval, and sailed by him with very kindly glances; but it is doubtful if he saw them; the single gaze he caught and noticed was the fierce, inquiring one of a gentleman opposite, whose mustaches, waxed to desperation, drew his lip tightly across his teeth, and gave him a peculiarly savage aspect. Charley experienced a convulsive desire to laugh as he

recognized "Monsieur le Compte" of the opera-box.

Somers signalled him at the moment, and the two friends met in the hall.

"What a jam!" cried the Bohemian. "I could n't get a word with the Baronne; but I saw the 'evergreen'" (such was his irreverent designation of Madame Grandoie), "and it seems she is not going away immediately."

"I believe not," returned Charley, dryly.

"The gods be praised!" echoed Somers, who, if he noticed the young man's manner, evidently bore no resentment. "What shall we do till dinner-time?"

"I am indifferent; something quiet. Let 's drive."

"*Bon!* we might look in, though, at the *salon*, — the art exhibition, you know, at the Palais de l'Industrie. There 's an acre or two of nude studies; an unusual number, and it has given rise to a curious whisper in the city which says they are portraits, the last freak of *haut ton*. It *is* tedious, however, and there 's nothing else there; a drive be it."

They coursed out the Champs and looked in a moment at the Hippodrome, where a blooming bevy of girl-jockies were riding absurd races on bicycles, after which they made a turn in the Wood, emerging at the Porte Maillot. It was an entertaining round, but Charley sat through it in dreamy silence, smoking innumerable cigars and drinking his glass of beer at the Cascade in blissful ignorance of its inferiority. His preoccupation was not unobserved by his companion, who smiled to himself and respected it; and it was with a start that Charley awoke at the gate in the twilight, where they got out and went in to dine *fuori le mura*.

Strolling down the Capucines, later, Charley stopped at one of the pretty flower-shops and ordered a bouquet forwarded to the Hotel Choisy, overwhelming the smiling Ceres with a hundred-franc note.

"*Mon Dieu! merci bien*, monsieur! It is a great price. I will do my *possible* — *un grand joli panier doré*, with the camelias, the jasmin, *les tubéreuses, les fleurs d'orange*. I trust, monsieur, he will be pleased."

"By Jove! my *magnifico*, there will be a feast in Clichy to-night, and your health drunk a mile deep in great flagons of *Bordelais!* Will you come down to the club? I must look in there a moment."

Charley begged off, and sought his quarters; he could brook no distraction from his fond thoughts. The rosy *concierge* met him in the court with an air of great mystery and importance, and slipped a tiny note in his hand, which he took breathlessly, and sped up stairs, madame of the candles smiling after him approvingly. The missive was a crested one, and had come in due state, borne by no less a personage than a liveried marvel of silence and discretion; and that was as it should be. Madame was a reader of Dumas, — *qui sait?* the court itself might have its quota of distressed beauty, as in days of old, and *ce cher Monsieur Vales*, — was he not a D'Artagnan?

Charley devoured the note with hungry eyes in the solitude of his chamber; it was not a lengthy feast, —

"The good Hercules will have *affaires, sans doute*, to-morrow, at three!" was all it said, and an airy "N" was its signature. It need scarcely have puzzled our Charley; the obscurity of lovers' messages should be as radiant daylight to lovers' eyes, read as they may to the unconcerned. Wherefore, then, did the youth read it a score of times? wherefore, indeed, after putting it away jealously in his bosom-pocket, and flinging himself upon a sofa to dream sweet dreams, must he needs start upright again, ravish it from its hiding-place, and read it half a score times more? The gentle, sympathetic reader can solve the problem perhaps better than I could.

When Somers came in later, he found the youth stretched out in luxurious *abandon* on the sofa, encased in a crimson dressing-gown, and fairly floating in smoke; the effect by gaslight was highly dramatic.

"*Diable des Ætnas!* how you sons of freedom do smoke!" cried Somers, divesting himself of his coat, and regarding Charley with serious eyes; "your daily portion of tobacco would shake me up, Charley, and I 'm no chicken. I must look after you, you know, — *vous voila gardé!*"

The speaker busied himself the while at the sideboard, which particular feature of their *ménage*, he had taken good care to have a model of its kind. He got out glasses and water and a mystic *carafe*, small in size but ominous in appearance, from which he poured a clear, greenish liquor into the two goblets, and by gradual and regulated additions of water transformed the whole into a milky, misty mixture that curled and wreathed itself like the genii-smoke. Charley watched the process with lazy eyes, and thought of Joe Jefferson "mixing cobblers" at Laura's Keene's before "Schneider" was "mein tog" by a handful of years.

"What the deuce is that?" he asked.

"The undiscovered elixir, my boy, what the good people scold at, and what the Frenchmen, who know no medium, make a poison of, but for men of discretion and sense like you and me, who can use it with intelligence, veritable drops from Hebe's cup. Drink, and be happy. Seriously, it is what you need after all that nicotine; you shall sleep like a babe and dream of angels after it."

"'I want to be angel,'" sang Charley, with a laugh, as he took the proffered glass; "*absinthe*, is n't it?"

"The same, and the best-abused blessing of the age; there 's not its equal in the pharmacopœia for the balmy refreshment of body and brain. It 's a spiritual draught, the dew of sleep; ~~and 'no coma,'~~ as they say in the schools."

Mr. Somers continued this amiable strain, while Charley sipped the drug, and under its subtle influence warmed into a rather unwonted flow of words. He had kept his counsel so well, that afternoon, that the weakness was rather lamentable; but then absinthe is a wonderful "refreshment," as Mr. Somers had remarked, but as Charley had not fully understood. The gentlemen shared a free interchange of ideas after the evening's indulgence. Charley was enthusiastic and confidential, and his friend smiling and sympathetic; but when the latter, with a touch of diplomacy that smacked little of absinthe, made some cautious casts of his own, and endeavored to lead the conversation in the region of certain anterior events, the younger suddenly put a check on his tongue, and went off incontinently to bed. The fact was, Mr. Somers labored at a distressing disadvantage with certain disconnected theories respecting his friend Mr. Wales in Paris, and his friend Mr. Huntley in New York, and was possessed with an almost inordinate desire to be more fully enlightened on the subject of their rather singular connection. He was obliged, however, to make the best of his knowledge, meagre as it was, having, in legal phrase, "taken nothing by his motion," made under cover of absinthe, and he did so philosophically. So little affected was he by the potation from the mysterious carafe, that he filled his venerable and gigantic meerschaum, which seemed to have been made to "match" its proprietor, and puffed it industriously for more than an hour over the construction of a letter to "My dear Dick." He did not close the epistle at the time, but added a last paragraph to the effect that certain events would probably "*eclater* to-morrow," and that he should "chronicle the *dénouement* with the complacent satisfaction of the faithful servant who had executed his orders with neatness and despatch!"

"Devilish little I had to do with it!" exclaimed the rather tired gentleman with a yawn, as he put the written sheets away; "*tant mieux!* if Huntley's turn is served, and he does the handsome as he knows how to do. *Va te coucher!* gentle Edward, smiling Fortune attends thee still!"

Charley was stirring at a small hour in the morning; the early world of peripatetic commerce was abroad in the streets in full cry, and long-drawn, unmusical renderings of "*Frais— s—es!*" "*Des bonnes cer—i—ses!*" and twenty other garden products, filled the outer air with uproar. He peeped into Somers's apartment just when that worthy, whose agreeable slumbers had been disturbed by a ray of encroaching sunlight falling athwart his nose, was helplessly considering the discouraging distance that intervened between the window-curtain and his bed. Somers regarded the young man in sleepy astonishment.

"Eh! what? I say, you 've made a mistake! I ought to have told you that when you hear those infernal women shrieking outside, it is time for honest people to be asleep. Just draw that curtain together, that 's a good fellow, and go back to bed." Whereupon he rolled over like an earthquake in miniature, and presented an expanse of back that Atlas might have envied.

Charley went back and rang for his coffee, tried a temporary siesta on his lounge without success, and finally took to pacing his room. He seemed quite unsettled, whether because there *is* "coma" after absinthe, or because other disturbing influences were at work upon him. Somers heard the nervous tramp, and was more distressed by it than he had been by the intrusive sunshine, for he wheeled up in his bed, and listened.

"That won't do! why could n't the youngster sleep?" And he glanced down along the inviting lines of his couch regretfully as he spoke. Five minutes later he came into Charley's room in a grotesque demi-toilet, and dropped on the lounge with a woe-begone countenance that sent the young man into a roar. "O, you may laugh, you sleepless prodigy, but it 's no joke to a man of my years and complexion to have these rare hours of morning rest made hideous by a hot sun, and roaring huckster-women, and pastoral youths who rise with the lark. Why, it 's the last glass in the bottle, this dreamy matinal time, rich with the 'bee's wing' of 'peace on earth and good-will to men,' to *nous autres* who have solved the problem of existence, and know that we may enjoy it only by forgetting it! Cometh up the coffee, *par exemple?*"

"It do," responded Charley, who had nothing for it now but to sit convulsed while Somers rattled on in a vein of more than usual extravagance. If, as perhaps the sympathetic Somers suspected, there had been shadows chasing each other through Charley's awakening dreams when "with the morning" had come "the light," they were pretty effectually dissipated, as Somers intended they should be, over that hilarious cup of coffee.

"I have a line from Vasour," he said to Charley, when, somewhat later, he appeared

in street dress, "begging us to breakfast with him at Carroza's. You are agreeable, I suppose; he will feel slighted if we neglect him."

"I don't know," began Charley, dubiously, and looking at his watch; a habit which had become chronic this particular morning.

"O, it's quite informal; you'll be free by two o'clock at the latest; that will answer for your engagement, will it not? You told me that you had one last night, you know."

"I believe I did," said Charley, in a vexed tone, "and all my family history in addition. I hope you found it entertaining! As you love me, old fellow, don't ask me to drink any more of that poison; my sleep after it was a sequence of painful interviews with the whole line of my ancestors!"

"*Va donc!* it was the turbot at the Porte Maillot; I told you not to eat it. It amuses me to hear you fellows from the other side rail at our time-honored compounds after your home-schooling on — what do you call it? 'Bourbon whiskey!' *Dame!* I had some once, disguised with mint and bitter almond and called a 'julep'; it was at Peter's with a party of your compatriots. What a head I had after it, to say nothing of my organs! Do you call it 'Bourbon' because of its murderous qualities?"

"*Question de goût!*" laughed Charley; "but I should hardly have thought you so susceptible."

"*Helas, ami à moi*, you may say 'susceptibility, thy name is Somers,' in general application to all the alluring *faiblesses* which assail our frail mortality! But *en route!* we shall not be any too prompt at the Palais Royal."

When Charley, punctual to the moment, as may be imagined, presented himself at the Baronne's, he was received with marked *empressement* by a venerable gentleman in house livery, who returned to him in the drawing-room after delivering his card, and begged that monsieur would follow him up stairs. It was only to what in French parlance is the "first story"; the *hôtel* did not boast an *entresol*, and the Baronne herself met him at the stair landing and ushered him into the broad doors of an upper *salon*.

"*Bon jour!* Mr. Wales, you will pardon me for receiving you *sans façon*, and in the *ménagerie— Va-t-en! Tutu, — méchant chien!* — but I am really not myself to-day, and the drawing-room is such a Sahara!"

Neither the *ménagerie* nor the mistress thereof called for apology, he thought, as he followed her with a beating heart; the first was a little heaven of luxurious appointments, and the latter in a dress of snowy muslin turned up at the wrists with long, pointed cuffs, and down at the neck with a wide sailor-boy collar, was too charming for criticism. It was an odd costume, odd for her in its girlish simplicity, and she had laughed gayly that morning as she buttoned on her cuffs before the mirror at the *petite pensionnaire*, and grown suddenly sober, afterwards, to see how little changed in all the years was the Nina d'Alencourt of Madame Gaspard's. Ah, the subtlety of a woman's dress! Nina had not paused to define the impulse which governed her choice that day, and sent her back to the winsome school-girl, all innocence and romance and dreams, of six years agone. If it had seemed to her something of a disguise, she overshot the mark, for it pleased without blinding the eyes for which it was intended. A trace only of the regal woman of the opera appeared where the cuff clasped the wrist and where the wide collar dipped in front and showed a little chain, circling the full throat like a thread of gold, and supporting some treasured talisman on her heart (he wondered with a little jealous spasm what it might be); but he saw the "form within" all the same; the smooth, bare shoulders and the snowy neck and breast with its burden of flashing jewels, as he had seen it that night in her box at the Italien; and it was thus he should ever remember her, as in some one dress more than any other we all recall the women who have marked our lives. He was wonderfully pleased with her, though in this guise; he had never felt so little *gêné* by her superb beauty; and as she tumbled the unhappy Tutu on his back in her pretty childish impatience, and flashed her white foot before his eyes, encased but uncovered in the low-cut graceful slipper of the day, the impulse was strong within him to catch her up like a child and toss her to his lips. But he only looked sympathetic, and was "desolated" to learn she was "not herself."

"O, I'm not ill," she said, petulantly, and then paused to add in a half-melancholy tone, "though I often wish I might be, just for the change. I am glad you came. I want some one to talk to death this afternoon, some one sympathizing and good as I think you are. Do you mind being talked to death?"

"By you? Life has no charm beside such a fate, madame!" cried Charley, gallantly, though with too much feeling for a gallant.

"Ah! Mr. Wales, you, too, speak the language of the world when you like. If I measured you by that speech I would not have you in my sanctum to-day. *Venez!* you must sit there in that little *fauteuil*, and I shall sit here where I can see in those big eyes if you are the true knight *sans peur et sans reproche* that I have thought you to be."

A little puzzled but very happy, Charley did as he was bid, and lowered himself as gracefully as he could into the *fauteuil;* he found it the essence of comfort too, though the Baronne laughed gayly at his temporary embarrassment with his legs, as she fell into the soft corner of a *canapé* opposite and leaned back lazily facing him with merry eyes. "Now you are studying a position! I won't have it! I want nothing but honesty from you this afternoon, monsieur, even to the pose of those pretty boots!"

Charley joined in the contagious laugh and submitted bravely to the situation, stretching his legs straight out with a lazy grace. He had been a little bewildered, but he recovered miraculously under the undefinable charm of her gay familiarity; he had wit enough even to weigh her last words, and form the instant determination to be "honest" as she asked. Poor Charley! it was the unconscious strategy of innocence; he would hardly have held his own on any other ground.

"There, madame, I make myself comfortable at the expense of grace. It is your command. I did n't think I was so long, though," he said, ruefully.

"Are you?" she asked, absently; but her eyes took in the half-recumbent figure as she spoke. Then they returned to his face rather seriously. "I am glad you came," she said, repeating her words; "I scarcely believed you would."

"Could you doubt it?" said he, earnestly.

"O yes, easily, very much."

"I cannot think why you should. I am happy, more happy than I dare to say, to have come to be here now."

It was hard to meet her steady, serious, unfathomable gaze and rhapsodize, and he faltered before it.

"And *notre Hercule*, where rides he the whilst?" she asked.

"Indeed, I hardly know. I left him with a learned gentleman from the Quartier, an Æsculapius who seems in great odor with our noble Olympian."

"Ah yes, I know; Monsieur Vasour, was it not? a horrid man who smells of the lamp," said Nina with a grimace.

"But a very clever one, I should think; he quite dazzles me. One feels like a Promethean vehicle in the master presence —"

Her laugh stopped him, and made him uncomfortable.

"You poor boy! Do you know, your Prometheus went once to attend an ailing nymph? The first time he was grand and serene; the second, he smiled; the third —"

"Well?"

"Oh! the nymph had got well again, and would n't see him."

"*Pauvre homme!*" laughed Charley; "even he, wrapt up in the gloomy sciences, could not resist you!"

She did not join the laugh, and he faltered again beneath the steady gaze. "Now I wish to know what you have been doing ever since you came to Paris, one, two, five days ago, under the guidance of Hercules. He is a naughty man, is Hercules; he belongs to my world, and all the people in my world are wicked, you know."

There was no penetrating this sphinx, beautiful and irresistible as that of Heine's fancy. Charley was almost embarrassed, and not particularly comfortable, but he sought refuge in a lively description of his brief pilgrimage in Lutetia, and she encouraged him with smiles and little sparkling bits of laughter, and he did very well indeed.

"And have you told me all, monsieur?" she asked, sharply, when he came to an end.

"Quite, I think, and a very stupid history it must have been for you."

The honesty of the frank brown eyes was not to be doubted even by the woman who was putting this man's soul to every test in her power, and judging him with every critical faculty of her being strained to the task.

"Of course it is stupid when I find myself the ruling genius of it!" she said, maliciously; "there was no expense of compliment in that; and what will you do, pray, when I go away?"

He looked up quickly with a hot surge of blood to his cheeks; but he met only a cold and rather cynical gaze, and the surge retired. He grew restless then — he would be irritated in a moment — and said, coolly enough, "Upon my word, I had not thought of it; I had hoped —"

"And Paris is one vast resource, *n'est ce pas?*" she laughed, harshly. "You will forget me in an hour, — properly circumstanced, in a tithe of that time; and why not? Why did you come to-day to see me, Mr. Wales?"

He was stunned, but found words to reply, "You asked it."

"Ah yes! so I did. I fancied, absurdly enough, that you were not like all these men who come here; but you are just the same."

The soft melancholy with which they were uttered could not cover the injury of these words. Charley rose quickly. Poor fellow! how easy she found it to play with him!

"Madame la Baronne! I can only regret —"

"There! you bad child! you promised to be good and endure, and you fly in a rage! Sit again, *vite! Je vous en commande!*"

He sat down silently again, but with a ruffled brow. She waited till she caught

his eye, and then held it like a magnet with her own, earnest, softened, almost tearful.

"You were very quick to resent my words, Mr. Wales," she said, sadly, in English, "and they were those of a poor, foolish woman to a strong man. Have you an idea, I wonder, of what words I have had to listen to and smile, and bear my humiliation, here, under my own roof, thousands, I had almost said millions, of times?"

Charley looked at her with a great throb of remorse; he tried to say something, but succeeded only in uttering a word, "Madame —"

"I wonder also," she continued in the same weary tone, "if you have any conception of the lives we lead, — for I am only one of a class, Mr. Wales, — of the life I have led, must lead to the bitter end?"

She paused then, and Charley said, humbly, "I know little of Continental life, madame, — nothing, you may say; but what you tell me seems incredible. In our country it could not be. May I ask your pardon for my haste?"

"You good child! Did you suppose I cared for it?" She was leaning her face on her hand now, and looking at him with a sweet sadness. "In your country all is free and beautiful, and a woman's burdens, if burdens they be, are of her own choosing. Do your women appreciate their condition, Mr. Wales?"

He smiled at the thoughts the question suggested.

"Ah! you smile, and I read your thought; but would they change their state for ours? I think not, though I have known some of your fair countrywomen to come here and make marriages, which is droll."

She shrugged her shoulders at the idea, and there was a little pause.

"You have never heard, you know nothing of my life, Mr. Wales?"

The question was rather direct, and he was confused by the reflection how little he did know.

"Nothing, madame; I have no acquaintance, no opportunities; I am here since so short a time," he stammered, and then took courage and added quickly, "why need I, madame? I know that you are beautiful and good, very good to me, and I —"

"You would die for me, would you not?" she put in mischievously, but with a glow on her face that his sudden show of feeling had called up. He saw the last and ignored the tone.

"There may be that in life which would make death dearer than life."

"And that which would make life more terrible than death," she responded, in a tone as full of feeling as his own. "I have known that; some day when we are the very, very good friends I hope we may be, I shall tell you about my life, and you will pity me, perhaps, and like me none the less because I am less good than you had believed. I have never had a friend, Mr. Wales, in all my life, — scores in name, but none in deed, — though poor Hercules would weep to hear me say it. You know what I mean?"

"I can fancy it; a friend is rarer than the world allows. I have but one. He will be blessed indeed who shall claim the name from you."

"I shall be blessed in finding him. Tell me, — I have never thought to ask you, — how old are you, Mr. Wales?"

"*Vingt-sept*," laughed Charley.

"'*Rouge, impair, et passe*,'" she laughed back to his uncomprehending ears. "I did not think you so old. *Tenez!* I should be astonished when I think of it. Why, I *am* embarrassed, Mr. Wales; I thought you were my junior!"

"If I might hope it would give me a grace in your eyes — Ah! madame," he added, catching her sudden gayety, "let it not be remembered against me; I was happier to be —"

"'The good child,' *n'est ce pas?*" she said as he hesitated. "*Enfant!* No, Mr. Wales, — and there 's a lesson for you, — no woman ever gave her heart entirely to a younger than herself."

A sweet lesson and an apt scholar.

"Then shall I assume my new powers," cried Charley, blazing at her with his laughing eyes, "as your reverend senior —"

"No, no! I won't be ruled. Don't attempt it!" she cried back; "I am untamable, Mr. Wales."

"I think not."

"*Ciel!* how cool he is! How should I be tamed, monsieur?"

How indeed! the question took a myriad forms in lip and eye and gesture.

"By a tender hand, as nature's fiercest spirits are. One need only not to be afraid of you."

"*Mon Dieu!* You are unmasking, Mr. Wales; and are you not afraid?"

He did not look like it certainly, with the smiling lips and the bright gleam in his eyes. He had gathered up Tutu and won the coy friendship of that minute bit of animation with his "tender hands," doing which he neglected to respond to the Baronne's question.

"I asked you if *you* were not afraid?" she repeated with a little wondering at her heart.

"No! I was; I am so no longer."

"And why?"

"Because," he said quickly, dropping Tutu and turning to her, "it is I who am to be your friend."

For a moment they looked silently at

each other, he with a rapt, almost exalted face, and she with wide-opened eyes and lips parted in a smile that had died at its birth into something like pain. A thread held them apart at that moment — a little, invisible thread that must break in another instant.

But she drew back before it parted. Not yet, not yet! it was so sweet.

"*Grace, Monsieur le dompteur*, it is I who am afraid!" she cried with a laugh, and rising as she spoke. "Are you a musician, Mr. Wales? Of course you are; music is essential to your system of soothing the savage heart."

"I am no musician, madame, though I can play a little and sing a little," he answered, indolently. There was a little chill of disappointment in his tone that was not lost on her.

"*Bon!* you shall both play and sing for me all the days when I wish it; *n'est ce pas, mon ami?*"

"Ah yes! if you should ever wish it." There was no chill in his tones now.

"I do wish it, even now," she cried. She had tripped across the *salon* and thrown open a little gem of a piano as she spoke, and now she came back to him, where he still sat watching her movements, and caught him by the arm, like an impulsive child that would not be denied.

"Come, how delightful it is! No one ever plays for me; that is, not as I care to hear. I am sure you will."

Charley laughed happily and obeyed. He ran over some rambling snatches of Mendelssohn with the rare expression which was his peculiar gift, while Nina leaned on the instrument and watched him with sparkling eyes. She worshipped music, and made it almost her key-note of character; and the firm but soft touch of the young man, modulated to the ordinary force of a woman's hand, but eloquent of concealed strength, was all her heart craved in him.

"How beautiful!" she murmured, when he came to a pause, — meaning his music, probably, but looking at him.

"And now, *à vous!*" he said, rising.

She looked at him silently, as if she had not heard the request.

"Do sing something for me," he pleaded, coming around to her. Some scattered sheets of music lay upon the piano, and he took them mechanically, waiting for her to wake from her revery. One of them caught his attention; a rough crayon-sketch of a head had been traced on it, and he turned to catch the light upon it. It was early twilight, or near it, and the room was darkening. He recognized himself, and turned to her with a quick impulse. She had awakened now, and was smiling and blushing all at once.

"*Fi!* give it to me," she cried, and made a little snatch at it, which simply resulted in his catching her hand and holding it very tight.

"*There!* you asked me to sing for you," she said, turning her head away, and tugging feebly for freedom. He released her at once.

"Please do," he said.

She sat down and sang some brief, sweet romance he had never heard, — sang it so soft and low he could only gather a few words of its meaning; but the perfect music thrilled him to the soul. He begged a repetition, but she rose when she had finished.

"No; some other time. You sing 'Annie Laurie,' don't you? Please sing it for me. I was once in an English school here, you know. Ah, how happy I was then! and I had a darling friend who sang it so sweetly. Sing it you, and I will go to my corner and be so exquisitely sad!"

It was one of the few songs he sang well, had sung all his life, and it might have brought "exquisite sadness" to the traditional man of stone to hear him on this occasion.

When he concluded there was perfect silence in the room. He could not see the Baronne from his seat, and he crossed over to the *canapé*. He found her with her head buried in the cushions, sobbing convulsively. A deep, immeasurable pity for the wearied, unsatisfied woman of the world welled up in his heart, and for the moment vanquished every other feeling. He went down upon his knees, and sought her hands and kissed them tenderly with the few words he could trust himself to speak. Her hands clasped his in turn, and pressed them on her heart, as if to still the tumult there; but she did not lift her head or speak, until he had leaned over and with his lips touched her temple where it met the cushion. She shivered at the touch, and drew herself away. There had been no mockery in her emotion, for she was very pale, and the eyes that met his were streaming with tears. He would have kissed these away, but she repulsed him gently. Once she faltered, and he caught her to him for an instant, but she struggled from his arms in the next.

"No, no!" she cried, and her voice was like a wail in his ears; "pity me! pity me, and leave me!"

As she spoke, her cold, clinging fingers twisted themselves from his own, and he arose without a word, gave the hands a last kiss, and moved away. His tears half blinded him, and he paused before he reached the door to clear his eyes. He heard his name uttered clear and strong, and with an almost hysterical tenderness, and turning he saw her risen from her seat upon her trembling limbs, with arms out-

stretched towards him, and the pale face drawn with an agony of feeling. In another moment she was sobbing on his breast, moaning low, unintelligible words, while her hands wandered nervously in his hair. Then she crept up to his lips with her own, cold and trembling as a frightened child's. Except those of her dead father, they had touched no other man's in all her life. And the rarest words that ever pass a Frenchwoman's lips came in a whisper to him, "Mon Charles, à moi! Je t'aime!"

CHAPTER XI.

A MESSAGE FOR AMERICA.

THERE are certain divisional periods in his work where the veracious historian is permitted by ancient custom to pause; and while he generously enables the absorbed reader to draw breath after a series of thrilling events, to stretch the limbs and adjust the chair-cushion, and light a fresh cigar, he does something of the kind himself, and in the interval of the acts goes rapidly back over the ground he has passed, and gathers the scattered threads of his narrative well in hand before proceeding. And at this point it is asking no more than the time-honored privilege of the old Chorus to beg the reader's indulgence for a little speech.

Does any one cry "Speech"? Perhaps not; but strengthened by entertaining reminiscences of the Speaker's Gallery and Scotch dinner-parties, I encourage myself with the example of those good souls who *will* speak, to whom speech is not to be denied, and mount my stump. If it unhappily shall be judged that I have hurried my hero too rapidly from point to point in a career that savors somewhat of the *descensus Averno* in the nostrils of the righteous, I have told the tale badly, and failed in an honest endeavor to give some redeeming color to the fatalities which dogged our Charley's path. It was certainly my hope to divest them in a measure of their sinful and irregular character, since, bad as they may be, they are but the precursors of worse. Having failed in this, as the ominous silence of my respected audience leads me only too surely to believe, I am impelled to express my regrets, as well as to insure my conscience by the addition of something like a warning. I regret, then, for a certain portion of my hearers, that my story is not one of peaceful scenes and virtuous deeds; that my hero must needs fall lamentably short in those high and peculiar qualities which could endear him to their hearts, or even render him tolerable in their eyes; and that my little stock of incidents and the several characters who figure therein are probably too thoroughly of the earth earthy to meet their lofty requirements. And let me be saved from any subsequent imputation of leading any spotless feet into the mire unwarned. I have intimated that the course of this history, like the course of most history, tends from bad to worse. Therefore, withdraw all ye who would avoid the dangerous exposure with dignity and prudence. I bow to your superior views of life in all humility. I weep that all the world is not so good as you, and I lower my eyes, innocent of resentment, before the cold condemnation of your glances as you pass out.

To the few who remain I turn with a lighter heart. I am relieved, and I may even venture a smile of sympathy as I resume my story; and if, in my covert study of the upturned faces before me, I shall detect here and there one lighted by gleams of kindly interest that tell me I have awakened the hearer's emotions, and that I may end by soothing a bitter memory and giving courage to struggling resolves, I shall be richly rewarded, and strengthened in my trust that it is from the lives of feeble men and women like ourselves, who, through much error, have fought their way to truth, rather than from the records of unblemished saints, that we may draw our hope and consolation in a life hedged round with perils and mishaps.

It was the afternoon of a burning August day at Paris, just two months after the events recorded in the last chapter; one of those fearful days when the asphalt scorches one's boots, and the yellow house-walls reflect a white heat upon the streets; when the industrious shower of the water-carts is repelled in a mist of steam, and the few loiterers on the Boulevards hug the southern wall, and even the impervious *cochers* seek the interiors of their cabs or abandon the same for the nearest *estaminet*, to groan and sweat over endless but ineffectual bocks of icy beer. The Gardens of the Tuileries, the Champs Monceaux, and even the little crescent of green at the new Church of the Trinity, are the refuge of perspiring thousands, who linger in the grateful shade, but with the inextinguishable vivacity of their race defeat its kindly service by lively gossip and restless movement. Out in the Bois, one finds whole lines of deserted carriages along the shaded drives, with their sleepy Jehus watching them from under adjacent trees, while stray peals of laughter from hidden corners of the tangled foliage tell of the wandering occupants. At Neeser's, an army of half-melted *garçons* struggles against nature in furnishing the brewage of Munich to another army of suffering consumers; and in Rue Scribe one may see at intervals some adventurous

American, fortified by an experience of boiling thermometers in the home-land, braving the scorched and shadeless path to Thorpe's and iced champagne.

There is, nevertheless, a certain activity prevailing in all the heated thoroughfares; it bespeaks a widespread movement among a large class; and in remarking that its main features are baggage-laden cabs, wheeling towards the various railway termini, and perspiring gentlemen who, bag in hand, pursue the same routes by omnibus and *panier*, we are led to conclude that this general stir is bred of a sudden attack of the out-of-town epidemic. The explanation is sufficiently apparent in the Champs Elysées, where a host of busy workmen are training long lines of tri-colored lanterns along the walks, and uniting the Place de la Concorde to the Arch of Triumph by a glittering cordon of holiday insignia. It is, in fact, the 14th of August, and to-morrow Paris, which is France, will go down in the dust to her idol and burn some millions in incense in the worship of him who sleeps in splendor at the Invalides; and, paradoxical as it may seem, every born Parisian who can contrive an escape will fly the scene, while a provincial multitude will pour in at the gates from the Midi to the Rhine.

In his shaded apartments on the Malesherbes, we find the noble Somers deployed upon a sofa, the insufficient proportions of which are pieced out by a convenient chair, smoking a meditative cigar in such *déshabille* as only the privacy of his chamber could excuse. There is a disorder in his room, and signs of pillage in the opened wardrobe and the scattered drawers of his bureau, while a chaos of personal effects is strewn, as only the bachelor-hand may strew them, upon the floor, the bed, and the half-score of chairs. In the middle distance a plethoric portmanteau, crammed to its utmost capacity, and promising a trial of strength to the hand that shall close it, tells the tale, — Mr. Somers also is going out of town.

He is going down to Trouville, — graceless, jolly, overflowing Trouville, *à coté de la mer*, where they wear a nightcap in the daytime, which is primitive and emblematic of repose, and bathe *en travestie*, as they dance four months later at the opera-balls. He is possessed with all the pleasures of anticipation, as he lies there and blows indolent clouds of smoke; he knows Trouville of old, and he is known of Trouville, and a thousand agreeable, enticing memories rally at the name and glow in his heart with genial warmth. Nor is this engaging prospect the only stimulus to his great self-satisfaction at this time. He holds in his hand a letter received that morning by foreign mail; it is a letter of congratulation, of commendation, I may say applause; it contains the single mystic injunction to "keep the kid on," together with a statement which has roused all the enthusiasm of our pilgrim to Trouville, namely, that the writer has caused a credit to be placed to Monsieur Somers's account at Bowles's, which it is hoped will prove acceptable, and be used to advantage in the execution of plans in which the writer and the recipient are "mutually interested."

There could be no doubt that the credit was "acceptable." Financial windfalls were as grateful to Mr. Somers as to his fellowmen; for, though Dame Fortune was not especially ungracious to him in the matter of supplies, there were times when the horizon of his affairs was specked with clouds, when the baronet-brother, who furnished a fair stipend on rigid conditions, would ruffle his brows at some trifling infringement of the same, and put on the screws in a way that was grievously felt by the pensioner. On such occasions the alarm of the latter, and his haste to plead an excuse and smooth over the fault, argued the impendency of very grave possibilities. It is not necessary to our story to deal with the remote antecedents of Mr. Somers; so much of the record as may be essential will come out in due course, and we are glad to leave him in the protecting halo of mystery, which garb carries so very many of us safe and unquestioned through the world. As we know him, and as the world goes, Ned Somers was not entirely a bad fellow. Practically destitute of the abstraction which we call a conscience he was, and little influenced by any considerations in life beyond his individual welfare and the ways and means thereof, there was yet no positive element of evil in the man, beyond the passive acquiescence of those natures which flourish on the neutral ground of moral ideas. The evil of their doing is a question for the philosophers; given a favorable conjuncture of circumstances, Somers would go through life and do no man a wrong; pushed by opposite influences, he would have sacrificed much in jealous regard of self, and felt himself justified possibly in so doing. The world is full of such men; indeed, when possessed of a certain executive force, they are the most successful men. What we succeed partially in expressing in the term *nobility* is the antithesis of his character, and thus his character is best described.

Somers was conscious of being accessory to an underhand scheme of Richard Huntley's against young Wales. Circumstances in no great measure controlled by him had lent their inexorable aid, and to an extent relieved him from action in the matter; but he had originally accepted the commission, and rejoiced now in payment for the

same. In all this he found matter for much self-congratulation; but it should be said in his favor, that he did have a little sympathetic twinge for Charley; he "liked the boy," and wondered, with a spark of regret, why he could not have been "one of another sort." "Huntley means his ruin, and what Huntley means to do he does. I'm sorry; I wish he had left me out of it; it's fishy!"

But the fine Anglo-Parisian did not permit this single disturbing thought to mar the felicity of the moment. In the form employed by deliberative bodies his meditations might have been summed up thus:—

Whereas, the said Charles is a victim to certain mysterious combinations of the said Huntley, and is therefore entitled to commiseration by reason of his many excellent and attractive qualities; and,

Whereas, the said Huntley is a devilish clever and altogether formidable fellow, whose orders are in no respect to be questioned, and who, moreover, is not ungenerous in his recognition of services rendered; and,

Whereas, the said Somers is infernally lucky to have served the one without having actually wrought injury to the other;

Be it resolved, that Trouville-sur-Mer offers at this moment a harbor of exceeding peace to the said Somers, to which, at this auspicious juncture of his affairs, it is voted that he shall without delay proceed, to enjoy a fitting respite from his labors in town.

The simple fact was, that while Somers really felt a strong liking for Charley, he felt a stronger fear of Huntley; and there is no choice in life between the master one fears and the master one likes.

Disposing of the final details of his preparation, Somers strolled around to the banker's, where he found some letters for Charley, which he brought away. He had done the same with exemplary regularity for two months, and forwarded the missives from various convenient stations of the post, but never from the bank, where the question of Mr. Wales's whereabouts was one of no little mystery. This day he returned to his apartments and made a neat packet of the letters, elevating his eyebrows slightly as he noted the feminine character of their superscriptions. This packet he addressed to a little-known Swiss village,—one of that vast colony of châlet-clusters where a summer world hides its sins,—described in modern vernacular as "a small hamlet of Vaud; *mille metres de hauteur*," and possessing the varied advantages of magnificent view, pure air, grape-cure, and cure of milk, *courses de montagnes et prix modérés*.

He smiled to himself over the task, and sang, softly,

"Zwei Seelen und ein Gedanke,
Zwei Herzen und ein Schlag."

After which he gave the packet to the *concierge* to post, and bidding that amiable but desolated female an impressive farewell, bestowed himself forthwith in a cab, with his *impedimenta*, and drove gayly to St. Lazare. Not many hours later he descended at the Arm of Gold, and there was joy among the nymphs of ocean, by whom the "Hercules" of Nina Choisy was gayly designated *Père* Neptune"; and in their delightful keeping we will leave him.

The world gossiped, as it gossips ever, in the long, idle, summer days, and the invisible agencies which bring in the supplies furnished more than one mysterious whisper about the Baronne Choisy. Some Paris friends, bound to Switzerland and pausing at Lyons, discovered the fact of her absence from the chateau, and sent the news back to Paris as a *bonne bouche* for the stay-at-homes; and from that point the wonder grew, and grew the more rapidly because there was no clew to her whereabouts. Somers, cornered at the club, denied the fact; driven from that, he confessed unbounded surprise and utter ignorance; and so the busy bees, left to their devices, searched Europe for the lovely Nina, and, finding her nowhere, established her everywhere, in one place after another, and sometimes in several at once.

Then there came a lull, and the false oracles, warned by instinct, were silent as tombs. Some gallant club-men, afflicted with the Alpine mania of clog-soles and empty knapsacks, stumbled upon the missing divinity among the lower hills. They were unambitious climbers, and shunned Chamounix and St. Gothard for the Ormonts and cheap *roulette* at Saxon; hence their falling into sequestered paths. They came back to Paris, and, like discreet Frenchmen, retained their discovery until they had dined; before they dined again, it was known from the Tuileries to the Faubourg Poissonnière that the dashing queen of the Avenue de la Reine Hortense was (*tout bas!*) *en liaison, sais-tu, avec ce jeune Americain de les grands yeux bruns!*

"*Enfin!*" cried the united Jockey Club; and with the afterthought it looked at itself in the glass, twirled its mustache, and said, under its breath, "*Comment diable!*"

Mr. Cheerful Scribbler, Paris correspondent of the New York Evening Tattler, was duly electrified by this bit of *scan. mag.*, as it came in fragments to his ears in the rattle of table-talk at the Café Anglais. He made hurried notes of the case, which he subsequently elaborated at his aerial nest in the Rue des Martyrs; and thus it came to pass that in the waning summer days a widely copied item of choice "foreign gossip" went the rounds of the Amer-

ican press, having first seen the light in the chatty columns of the enterprising journal above mentioned. I quote so much of it as serves our purpose.

"All Paris," it said, — "and 'all Paris' at this out-of-town season is a comprehensive term which takes in Baden and Spa, Hombourg, Biarritz, gay Vichy, and Switzerland entire, — is in a flutter of excitement over a fresh development of 'scandal in high life,' which has more than ordinary piquancy. These little events in France have the pleasing quality of arousing a gentle and sympathetic interest, without in any degree damaging the characters of what we may call the 'contracting parties'; *au contraire*, the distinction rather elevates them in the general esteem, gives them a certain attractive *renommée* in the social world, and wins the high approval of the scarred magnates thereof. In this instance, however, the case will possess unusual interest for your readers, since, while the fair enchantress is the beautiful Baroness Ch—y, whose invincible charms have been the talk of Paris for several seasons, the favored gentleman is no other than the *only son of a prominent banker of your city*, who shall be nameless.

"I will only add that his handsome face is too well known, both in the street and on the avenue, to have been forgotten in the brief interval of his absence abroad. The sensation here is intense, on account of the high position of the Baroness and the singularity, in Parisian eyes, of her choice in bestowing her favors on *l'Etranger*."

Following in the wake of this precious epistle, we will leave the Grande Ville to its August sunshine, its loveliness and its sins, and hie us homeward over the western sea.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. HUNTLEY'S PROGRESS.

Cœlum non animum mutamus. We come from Paris, and we [redacted] Newport. There has been some marvellous scene-shifting; and what a cool relief, after those glaring, sunburnt streets, are these pretty lines of cliff, beach, and sea, with green trees and smiling cottages beyond! Is 't not a rare, sweet scene, my French friend?

Charmante! But tell me, these actors whom I see, monsieur, thronging this pretty stage? They are the same. No! true, it is another tongue, but the dress, the action, the manner, — *bah! ces sont les mêmes!* We have voyaged in our dreams only; this giddy, feverish play, 't is just as giddy and as feverish as that other across the sea. Less sinful? Perhaps; certainly less smooth. Stay! what, if you know, may be the argument? Me, I am very stupid, I beg your pardon; but out yonder, as you will admit, there was method in all the madness, — a legend in the tumult and fury of the stage, which one might read and comprehend. But what to gather from such chaos as this? I see no class, no right of place; I see nothing, monsieur, but a mad whirl of social life, without distinctions and free from barriers, where there seems great danger for all, and protection for none. *Mon Dieu! mon ami*, it is worse than Paris; it is *la Commune* diabolically perfected!

Softly, my friend; do not give our struggling civilization so hard a name; it is younger, by some thousands of years, than yours, and in time we hope for better things. You happen upon a peculiar era of evolution; the star of ancestral pride had no title to its place in our skies, and has recently fallen, and Nouveau Riche is the genius of the hour. The homage of name and line died when legal-tender was born, and Mrs. Van Anything, with a clear lineage running back to the burgomasters, must take the wall for Mrs. Paul Potiphar, and fly the course with all her court as Fortuitous Smith careers like Phaeton on his resistless course. It cannot soil the glossy black hides of his matchless six-in-hand to say that Fortuitous owes his all to the magic popularity of a nameless compound at a dollar the bottle; there will be fools to buy and knaves to sell when you and I are dust. And why rake the ash-heap to tell me that Mrs. Potiphar's Potiphar began his business-life in the vocation of grog-mixer to the maritime world of South Water Street? Times, men, and principles have changed. Progression and aggression are the key-notes of our civilization, and we reject the mouldy traditions of the cradle-lands with scorn. With equal-handed recognition of merit and ability, we send our prize-fighters to the legislative halls, and dismiss the useless veterans of our wars to the starvation byways of foreign lands. There is but one god, and his name is Success! Down, down, all ye, and worship him! *N'importe* the hideous brute-face, the filth-stained hands, and the corrupt heart. He glitters with gold; gold to pay and gold to give; and more men will come at his call than gathered to the loaves and fishes by Galilee. Kneel to him, follow him, imitate him; give heart and soul to the task; heed no cry of nature or voice of need; be deaf to the tender woman and the weak old man; the one will smile on you by and by, and the other will die, and you must lose no minute in the breathless race. Some day, more glittering and golden even than your god, you shall push him from his stool, and sit triumphant in his place. Bah! it is but a question of decimals; beat him a head, and the place

is yours; but never dream of happiness so long as he is richer by a dollar than you.

And see how here in our Newport — our little allegorico-comic picture of American life — the metal smooths the way! They cut the corners of whist-cards in France and gild them to make them slip; see how the "bad cards" slip in this pretty deal we are watching! Down the dance goes Beauty with the Beast, and, as I live! Rigolette! and Clytemnestra! and all because of the gilt!

Why do you not join the round? What! Zounds! is the record so bad as that? Never mind, old fellow, are you not gilded? Achilles was not more proof than you! Enter, and be happy!

We find the Jennings household, of which Emma Howland is a treasured member, installed in their cottage on the cliffs, where, indeed, they have passed the summer. The gay world has seen little of Miss Howland, however, and it is whispered that she is broken in health. As we see her this hazy afternoon, sitting with the rose-cheeked Clare in the shade of the eastern porch, there would seem to be good reason for the report. The contrast is painful when one turns from the face of her merry friend, glowing and sparkling with life and health, to her own, so wan and colorless in the shade. The slender form, too, is more fragile than we knew it, and the hand which is twining itself in Clare's luxuriant curls is thin, and shows the dark, overlying veins all too plainly.

Miss Jennings, with all the old child-manner, sits flat upon the porch, with her pretty head resting on Emma's knee, and her eyes staring blankly out to sea; the whereabouts of her legs — assuming, if we may, that she is possessed of those useful appendages — would best be described as "anywhere." The slant rays of the sun are falling beyond the cliffs upon sea and sail, and the drive is growing lively as fashion gathers to its sunset parade; but the silent girls keep their places, and seem to have no thought of the gay world without. Emma is the first to wake from her revery.

"And Mamma Jennings is then quite decided?"

"O yes! You know she never decides twice, — I mean, she decides once for all; it's as good as done. And is n't it odd? After teasing her a whole year to go, now, when it is certain to be, I feel a sort of shock; I think I am a little afraid. Dear me! I'm just like Neddie; he cried so hard to be let go to the minstrels, and when he saw their black faces he slid down on the floor and cried harder than ever to be taken home."

"Have you lost your old desire to go?" asked Emma, smiling down at the upturned face.

"O dear, no! It is n't that, but I never thought much about the *going*, you know, and there 's that awful sea! I was frightened to death every moment the other day when we were out in the yacht with Mr. Huntley. I shall be just good for nothing, I know, the whole way over. But I am glad, ever so glad! 'Not all old Neptune's flood,' as that darling Booth says, can 'wash that out!' And are you not too?"

"I shall enjoy it very much, very much indeed," answered Emma, quietly.

In the interval of silence which followed, Clare caught the thin hand in her own and looked up softly.

"Have you thought, dear, we might run across that naughty Charley somewhere?"

There was the faintest possible flush on Emma's face, but no answering pressure of the hand.

"I have thought of it, it seems quite possible. I should be very glad if we might."

"Would it not be nice! But what a lecture I shall give him. I shall study it up all the way. There 's mamma calling to know if we are going to ride. You don't care to? I 'll run and tell her, and come back."

Miss Howland leaned back wearily in her chair, a great, soft wicker-work affair, that seemed to fold her in its arms in conscious sympathy. The mention of Charley's name had awakened painful thoughts — thoughts that sometimes slept, but never left her; and her eyes, looking upon the darkened waters, were dim and saw them not. Bravely and hopefully had she waited for an answer to her second letter, written in the winter,— the letter so full of affection and tender words, — the letter in which all that she might write she had written; but it had never come. She could not know that he, the most negligent of correspondents at best, had begun a reply to it, beginning the work in England, hurriedly completing it in Paris, and ending by tossing the epistle into his desk. We know what became of the letter; she never saw it, and it was just as well, perhaps. For months she watched and hoped, invented ingenious excuses for him and accepted them for herself, and fought off, to the last, the shadow that boded such misery to her; but with the long summer days the hope had died. If she could have heard of him but indirectly, some word to tell of his welfare and his feelings, if he were well and not unhappy, the burden would not have been so hard to bear; but he wrote to no one, after that single letter there came no tidings whatever. It was the very worst she

had feared; he seemed utterly blotted from her life.

But the patient courage of the woman gave no outward sign of failing; neither the ever-watchful eye of Huntley nor the tender solicitude of Clare could detect any further evidence of the bruised heart in word or manner. To the latter, who waxed wrathful and tempestuous over the non-arrival of the famous fashion-plates, she said, "We ought to remember what a whirl he is in; and you know he always made such a task of a letter."

"I don't care!" flashed Miss Clare, "it's just a shame, and I shall scold him famously when he comes home with his waxed mustaches and Paris airs. I'll make fun of everything he says, and ask him if it is true, as Nurse Rollin says, that they eat nothing but frogs there, and cut off heads of a Sunday in the square for public entertainment. I wish he was here this minute!"

Something, however, in this inspiring idea seemed to check the young lady's vindictive impulses, for she grew pensive at the thought, and ended by brushing away more of those truant tears. What drew them from their source was not quite apparent; but she was very tender to Emma thereafter, and in time they came to speak very rarely and briefly of the absent one.

Mr. Huntley had asked Emma once quite suddenly, "You hear occasionally from your cousin, of course? I am in his black books; he writes me no more."

"I have had but one letter from him; he was always a poor correspondent."

There was not a tremor in lip or voice, and the heart of Huntley was glad. But the woman suffered; her pillow could have told a weary tale of tears, and the brave soul that bore itself patiently before the world faltered and grew faint in the darkness and solitude, and her health failed. This was the unspoken thought of all her friends; for, though there was no apparent disease, it needed only the comparison of the fading girl with her former self to convince the observer that she was really ill. She had never been a strong woman, but from physical delicacy she lapsed into weakness. The anxious eye of Mrs. Jennings noted the change, and she had ventured once to question Emma very guardedly and carefully. But she met only with pained surprise, with unhesitating disbelief, indeed, at the time, which made further discussion of the subject impossible. She was so moved by her fears, however, that she ignored boldly the prescribed date of the fashionable hegira, and hurried her household down to the beach a month before the usual time, taking Emma with her.

The move was a serious inconvenience to Mr. Richard Huntley. That gentleman had made very satisfactory progress at the house in the Avenue, where he was grown to be something of an *intime*, as he was also now a frequent participant in the business councils of Wales, Burton, & Co. Without self-questioning and without the slightest anticipation that he could ever be more than the sympathetic and congenial friend he was, Emma Howland continued to meet him in her parlors, and after a time to accord him a certain preference which was not unnoted by her gentleman friends. Of their inferences she had no hint, and of the outside rumor she heard no word. But the advantage was one that Huntley built on bravely; it thinned the ranks of his competitors, and helped him to push that stolen march, of which the object never dreamed, with steady persistency.

But the flight to Newport was a disaster to his arms; it occurred at a peculiarly unfortunate period in his strategetical game, and it is not to be wondered at if the guarded patience of the man gave way under the disaster, especially as patience was purely a borrowed quality with him, worn for a time and for a purpose. He lost his head, or came very near it, and went beyond his *rôle*, for he followed the party to Newport within a week, under a flimsy excuse of business in Boston; and as there was not a hotel opened in the place, they lodged him for three days at the cottage, during which time his devotion to Emma was so marked that even the unsuspecting girl was made momentarily uncomfortable by it. Then his blood cooled, and he came back to town to think on what he had done.

Mrs. Jennings viewed the affair in some perplexity. She was perfectly well aware of Miss Howland's feelings, and shared the general affection for the absent Charley; but she was also very favorably disposed towards the broker. She liked him, in fact, very much, and decided, after some reflection, that Emma would be made happy and rescued from that insidious decline by marrying him.

"She is just wasting herself away over that wayward boy, who is forgetting her as fast as ever he can. If she would only learn to like Mr. Huntley! I think I'll speak to her."

With this purpose she managed a *tête-à-tête* with Emma some days after Huntley's visit. It was in her own room, where the young girl often lingered, seated at the feet of the elder, for whom her affection was all that of a daughter, enhanced by an enthusiastic sentiment of admiration and confidence.

"I think you like Mr. Huntley very much, do you not, dear?" asked Mrs. Jennings, after a circumspect approach to the subject.

"O yes! very much indeed. He is so agreeable, and so very clever, and was such — such a friend of Charley's, you know."

"So he was. I remember."

"I suppose he must be much older than he seems, he has seen so much of life and the world. He is really wonderful sometimes."

"I can readily imagine, though he has never exhibited his wonders to me," said Mrs. Jennings, smiling; "and you think him 'old'?"

"I don't know, of course; not particularly old, perhaps; but forty or more, certainly. It is not easy to guess the exact age of a man like him."

"Forty can scarcely be called old; men at that age possess deeper feelings than at any previous time."

"I suppose so, and I have always imagined Mr. Huntley to be a man of peculiarly strong feelings. One feels an instinctive curiosity about such people, a vague suspicion that their lives have been marked by great events, saddened by some heavy disappointment. Of course, they never speak of it, and one is left to one's surmises."

"That does n't always follow, my dear; a man, many men, arrive at Mr. Huntley's age without having had their stronger affections engaged."

"Do you think so? Of course, you are right; but I always think that passage of life belongs to earlier years."

"With women, as a rule, it does; but with men, and especially with men who enter the world young and encounter much vicissitude, the sentiment often remains unawakened."

"But I am quite sure Mr. Huntley has had his 'experience.' I have detected indubitable evidences of it more than once."

"Have you, indeed," laughed the elder, — "you watchful puss! And in what, pray?"

"O, I could scarcely explain in what," answered Emma, blushing faintly. "Once or twice he has spoken of love, briefly and delicately; rather sadly too, and only as a man could do who has loved some one — "

"Or loves some one now," put in Mrs. Jennings, cunningly.

The shot fell short, however; Emma only mused, and after a moment said, innocently enough, "No, I should hardly think that possible."

"What a child it is!" laughed Mrs. Jennings, bending down to kiss the upturned face; no one so well as she, the wise woman of the world, might know the rare value of that pure, guileless heart.

"As I said," she continued, seriously, "men at Mr. Huntley's time of life and of a nature like his, if I judge him rightly, have intensely strong feelings. Whether they have had what you call an 'experience' or not makes very little difference; if they conceive an affection, it is very deep and strong, and it must be a great misfortune for them if it is misplaced or made light of."

"It would be very sad," said the young girl, sympathetically.

"It would be more than sad; and it would be very wicked wilfully to encourage or to deceive such a one, — would it not, dear?"

"O, terribly! Could any one do that deliberately?"

"There are some who would, I fear; very few; not you, I know, above all."

"You good mamma! I would not, though — I could not!"

"And yet — Listen, you funny child! I am going to tell you what every one in the world knows but you, — Mr. Huntley is in love with you!"

Emma looked up for an instant with terror and bewilderment in her eyes; then she flushed scarlet, and buried her face in her friend's lap.

"O Mamma Jennings, *don't* say that!"

Mrs. Jennings was a little startled, despite herself, by the drawn face and the appealing tone.

"There, there! never mind, darling. I — somebody ought to have told you before, since you have got no eyes for yourself; if it had been *somebody* I know, you would have seen it long ago! There is no harm done to any one, dear; and I think now that all my fine, preparatory questions were mistakes. I only wished to know just how you felt."

"I never dreamed of such a thing!" said Emma, raising her pale, distressed face; "I did not, indeed, mamma, and now — Dear me! I think I can see something of it. How stupid I have been! but I did *not* know. O mamma! what shall I do?" And down went the glossy head again in despair.

"Tut! It is nothing, child. The worst is over, and we will easily arrange the rest," said Mrs. Jennings, with a little huskiness in her voice, as she patted the head lying on her knee.

"I am so sorry! How could I have been so blind? And yet he was so serious, so old! O mamma! you don't think — have I — was I — encouraging him?"

"No, pet; no possible blame can attach to you. But, child, why do you dwell on his age? Surely, he is not so very venerable; he is younger in nature than half these ungoverned young men you know. After all, do you not like him a little, just a little?"

The young girl was all alive now to the significance of Mrs. Jennings's words. She

looked up with a pained face, and said in a choking voice, "Don't, mamma, please!"

And Mrs. Jennings saw the hopelessness of the task in her face, and felt it in her words.

"Pardon me, darling, it was only the old lady's fun; I won't say any more, and you must not let this worry you; it is all over. But you are not sorry that I told you before *he* did, are you?"

"Ah, no! I am so glad you did; but I can't think what I shall do. I can never see him again!"

"Fiddlesticks!" cried Mrs. Jennings, assuming a merry face; "leave it all to me, dear; you can trust me, can't you? Only put away those troublesome thoughts. There! I hear the girls; now run away and gossip, and I will plan a campaign, for our faithful knight will come again before long, I know. *Aux armes!* There, go along!"

But it was not so simple a thing to "put away" the troubled emotions that this revelation awakened in Emma's heart. It had shocked her far more than Mrs. Jennings could know or imagine; for there was something more than the mere pain and humiliation of her mistake, something which shaped itself in a vague distrust, an intangible fear, before which she shrank and cowered with a great dread. She could not ignore the powerful influence that Huntley had gained and held over her, or blind herself to a strong, sympathetic liking for the man which had grown in her heart. She did not love him. O no! she could love but the *one*, and should love that one always. But that terrible aching void which only one love could wholly fill had given place to a certain affection for the other, involuntary and unsuspected. And now this affection, just discovered, filled her with fear; but she was powerless to cast it out.

Why could he not have been the impassive creature she had imagined him? — the devoted but passionless friend of the beautiful and wealthy girl?

She shed bitter tears that night, and wrestled with the new terror which had entered her life, and the trembling lips moaned in the darkness, "O Charley! why did you leave me? Why do you not come back?"

She had her first real illness after this. She broke down suddenly, and Mrs. Jennings, though much alarmed, felt a certain satisfaction in securing the long-desired opportunity for medical advice. The prosy rhetoric of the man of science merely confirmed her fears.

"No present disease, madam, but an unfortunate susceptibility, possibly a predisposition. Her mother was delicate? Ah! I should have surmised as much. There are indications of mental depression, and too little of what we may call the physical rebound in the system of one so young. A case requiring great care and all possible distraction without excitement; a case which particularly demands change, a modulated variety of life and scene, or even altered conditions of life. I need scarcely tell you, madam, how precarious are these periods of a young girl's life. A European voyage? The very best of diversions, madam; care at the outset in not overdoing the strength. Winter in Italy or South of France. I have no hesitation in recommending it as the very best course."

Acting upon this advice, Mrs. Jennings brought her long-meditated project of a visit abroad to definite shape. She saw Mr. Wales, and found no obstacle in his wishes; he only regretted that the "voyage should have the character of a melancholy necessity for his niece," and was warm in his recognition of Mrs. Jennings's great goodness in arranging the trip for her benefit. Mr. Wales's respect for and confidence in Mrs. Jennings were unbounded; she was one of the "successes," and in a class for which he had the highest regard. So the wise lady made her preparatory arrangements rapidly, and had them well in shape before the secret was revealed to the excited Clare. That young lady begged piteously to be allowed the privilege of telling Emma, and after many admonitions it was granted her, and that afternoon when we found them enjoying the sunset sea the momentous intelligence had been imparted. We leave the pleasing figures of speech, the tremendous flights of fancy, in which that exuberant damsel had indulged before the silence of exhaustion and reaction in which they were first disclosed to the lively imagination of the reader, while we return to Mr. Huntley.

He had "come again soon," as Mrs. Jennings predicted, and had been a regular and frequent visitor at the beach and at the cottage. But a new and uncomfortable shadow had entered his dreams. On his second visit he found Miss Howland recovering from an illness, and did not see her; he saw Mrs. Jennings instead.

"The poor child is quite miserable," she said; "she insisted on seeing some gentlemen friends a few moments this afternoon, but I vetoed any further indulgence emphatically. You must excuse her, Mr. Huntley; she will regret her inability to see you."

"I am too pained to learn that she is not well to regard my own disappointment," said Huntley, with an anxious face and a raging heart. "Gentlemen friends!" and before him! And what was this diplomatic woman "up to"? Of the very few people in the world the man really feared, Mrs.

Jennings was perhaps the most formidable at that moment.

"O, I trust it is nothing!" said the lady. "These young bodies have their little maladies, you know, often as causeless as they are harmless. Miss Howland has had much sorrow, and, I fancy, was sadly afflicted by the unceremonious departure of her cousin in the winter. She is wonderfully tender-hearted; it is a pity we older ones cannot give these sensitive children a little of our *savoir supporter*, Mr. Huntley; they are so absurdly given to bruised hearts and rainy-day sentiment!"

"I trust Miss Howland has not fallen into that melancholy strait," said the broker, bewildered and enraged. The delicate manner with which she elevated him to an equality with herself as a grave senior, and her agreeable tone of confidence, were totally unappreciated by the gentleman.

"Something of it, perhaps; if she were not such an angel, I should have less patience with her. Do you never hear from the runaway, Mr. Huntley?"

"From — O, Mr. Wales; he has quite discarded me. I hear *of* him, however, at Paris."

He looked very much as if it were possible to press further information from him on that head, but Mrs. Jennings showed no disposition to avail herself of the chances.

"Indeed! enjoying himself, no doubt. They *will* do it, and Charley is like us all; if the scapegrace does not return to grace soon, though, I shall conspire against him."

"And you would be a dangerous antagonist!" Huntley could not but say, though there was more evidence of the smart in his tone than he had imagined.

"I should think I might be, Mr. Huntley, as I value the happiness of Miss Howland as I do that of my own daughters."

After this he saw Emma, but always in the company of Mrs. Jennings, who, with a quiet persistency that foiled him effectually, assumed entire supervision of their intercourse, and shaped it according to her desires. He was bewildered by suspicion and anxiety, and the constraint he had not failed to detect in Emma's manner — for even under the broad, protecting wing, she felt a strange embarrassment in Huntley's presence — did not tend to quiet his alarm. It drove him to expedients, and under cover of a yachting party he had hoped to escape the watchful guardian; but even in this, and to the speechless astonishment of her progeny, who knew her deep antipathy to boats of all kinds, Mrs. Jennings came resolutely to the front, and Mr. Huntley eventually returned to New York in a state of desperation.

Learning there of the European project, which had not been mentioned to him at Newport, he repaired incontinently to his quarters, hurled a fine new Christy at Venus Callipyge, and, glaring angrily at the man in the mirror, "d—d his luck" in no gentle terms. It *was* aggravating beyond words to have a complication more alarming, if possible, than all he had overcome, arise at this juncture of affairs. Only a little time before — it was when he received the satisfactory advices of Mr. Somers at Paris — he had surveyed the field with exultant feelings, and like a great strategist, who has gained by covered movements the key of the position, felt victory within his grasp. And now! — it was bad enough to have Miss Howland dragged away from town a month earlier than he had expected, and to have that in—— clever "Mamma Jennings" stepping between them, as she for some inexplicable reason seemed disposed to do. But to go to Europe — why, it was ruin out and out to all his plans! At the least, it would make sheer waste of all his months of careful advances, and might lead to — to anything, everything, he did not like to think what. The man of passion got the better of the schemer at this thought. In his anger he seized on a very small weapon indeed; for alighting on a copy of the "Tattler" containing the letter of Mr. Cheerful Scribbler which I have noted, he sent marked duplicates of it by post to Mr. Wales and Miss Howland. After this noble thrust he smoothed his front, gathered all his hopes and fears and anger and love in one deep resolve, and in the last week of August went down to Newport to put it to the touch.

Emma Howland, sitting alone in the twilight, murmured again the glad words of Clare, simple echo as they had been to her unspoken but governing thought: "Perhaps I shall see him there! It seems even like a certainty, and yet how far away, how dreamlike! I wonder would he think me much changed; I wonder — "

"Ah, you poor dear! I thought it was only about the drive, and behold, a long list of instructions from mamma, which has kept me all this time. Letters from New York; and fancy — you dear impassive thing! — our passage taken in the Russia for the middle of next month! I wonder what the Russia is like. I heard Captain Murray say the China was an 'old tub'; but China is a long way from Russia, is n't it? I should not 'admire,' as that excruciating smirk from 'Bost'n' says, to 'go to sea in a tub,' — would you? If you are n't too tired, dear, do come and play some of those delightful sonatas now in the dusk before supper, they make one so romantic and *so* hungry!"

It was a happy chance that led Mrs. Jennings to note, among the contents of her

mail that afternoon, a brown-wrapped paper addressed in a coarse, sprawling hand to Emma; to note it curiously, and, impelled by an indescribable feeling, to break the cover and glance across the sheet, where a marked passage at once fixed her eye. She read it once, twice, and then never rested until the paper was in ashes. Many a time afterwards she reverted to the circumstance with something like a superstitious thrill; but at the time she only wrinkled her brows in angry bewilderment.

"Who sent it? could *he* have done it? If he *did*, I will know it; and *if* he did —"

The ordinarily placid, handsome face boded no good to the one who dwelt under the weight of that suspicion, should it prove to be warranted.

CHAPTER XIII.

A GAIN OF GROUND.

When Mr. Huntley called at the cottage after his arrival at the seaside, he found himself, as usual, in the hands of Mrs. Jennings. He was thoroughly convinced that this lady latterly lay in wait for him on all occasions, so inevitably did she precede all others on the scene whenever he presented himself at the cottage.

"Ah! Mr. Huntley, how do you do?" she said, giving her hand to him with her usual cordiality, and, turning to the domestic, told him not to summon Miss Howland immediately, she would do that herself. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Huntley, but, before the girls come down, I wish to speak with you on a subject of great importance."

The gentleman buckled on his armor and filled his lungs in preparation for an attack. He was never quite sure of Mrs. Jennings; he feared everything, and was or tried to be in readiness for anything, but it must be owned that he was never free from a degree of trepidation in her presence.

"I wished to ask you," continued the lady quietly, but regarding him closely, "if you had seen a certain wretched bit of gossip which appeared lately in some New York paper: it was in a Paris letter."

Huntley breathed easier. He was quite equal to any situation where the quality of deceit simply was called into play; it did not even alarm him to think himself suspected. His assumed distress was perfect.

"Good heavens! has that reached here already? I heard of it myself but yesterday, and you have but forestalled me in speaking of it, Mrs. Jennings. It was in great part my object in coming down to warn you. Has Miss Howland — I trust it has not reached her."

The lady felt it impossible to question the sincerity of his troubled face; she even felt a little remorse for having held him in suspicion, and she spoke warmly under the sense of relief.

"By a chance she has not, poor child; it would have been a misery for her. And would you believe it? some one sent her a marked copy of the paper!"

"My God! — Your pardon, Mrs. Jennings; can it be possible?"

"It fell into my hands, fortunately. It amazed me. I did not think she had an enemy in the world."

The expression of the broker's face was a fine simulation of grief and anger.

"Have you preserved the paper or wrapper? Is there any clew by which we might trace the cowardly act to its perpetrator?"

"I burned them both instantly. Better thus; and since the evil was prevented, it matters little who the wretch was."

"I should like to know," he said, grimly; "but the danger remains. The matter is something that will be much talked of, and it is to be feared that she will hear the story, in spite of every precaution. I discovered that Mr. Wales had read it, and ventured to suggest that it would be very painful to Miss Howland; she will learn nothing through him, I 'm sure."

"Nor in any way, so far as I can prevent it. I shall be glad to have your assistance, Mr. Huntley, in that. I will call the girls."

Mr. Huntley was jubilant over the marked kindliness of these words. "By Jove! I believe she thought it was I! And how glad she was to discover her mistake — The triumphs of innocence are sweet, and I 'm better by several tricks with *her* at any rate. Courage! *mon enfant!*"

Mrs. Jennings, going out on her errand, said to herself, "I almost wish the child would fancy him; it will be a long wait for that flyaway now, and after all— The scamp! I am out of all patience with him!"

And Huntley had reason to congratulate himself upon an improved state of affairs during the days that followed. There was a marked relaxation in the vigilant watch of the elder lady, and a return of composure in Emma, who was only too glad to shield herself in the belief that his feelings had been misjudged, — a belief that his guarded bearing tended to confirm. Indeed, it might almost have been judged at the time that it was to the laughing Clare rather than to the invalid girl that his heart pointed. But he was only watching his chance, and it came of course; it always does.

They were all walking on the cliffs one afternoon, when Emma was overtaken by sudden fatigue, a circumstance of frequent occurrence latterly. She returned to the cottage, and he accompanied her, of course;

he could not do less; and she could not refuse to permit him. He was tenderness itself in arranging the big chair and its cushions in the cool parlor, full of a playful, petting attention and merry words that won her smiles and almost her heart. Talked to as a woman, petted as a child! Do it well, O reader mine! and she is yours!

"I am ashamed to have been such a trouble to you, Mr. Huntley, and I will relieve you now; you must rejoin the others."

He looked the picture of dejection; but O, how his heart was battling in its strong walls! He needed all his matchless self-control now.

"And thus you reward me by sending me away!" he said, with comic but meaning melancholy.

"O no!" said Emma, uneasily, "but I thought —"

"Let me stay, please. I will be good. Shall I read you something" (it was so innocent to be read to!) — something from this?" he added, taking a little volume from the table. "It looks like a favorite; well used."

Could there be danger in that calm face? She looked at him covertly, and smiled when she saw the book.

"Would it amuse you to read *that?*" she asked.

"I especially admire Heine," he responded quietly, turning the pretty leaves; "once I was quite diseased with his verse, I assure you; there are some rare gems among the *Lieder*, this, for example, —

'Du bist wie eine Blume
So hold und schön und rein.'

I see you have marked it. And fancy him, the man of reckless, dissolute life, writhing upon a bed of agony and dictating the softest, sweetest lines in poetry!"

"It is strange," answered Emma, absently; but whether it were Heine on whom her thought rested, or the present Huntley, who was one never-ending revelation, it would be difficult to determine.

He toyed idly with the book for some time in silence, and she, stealing a glance at him, felt her fears rising again.

"The thought that you are going away so soon and so far haunts me and spoils all my efforts to be agreeable," he cried at last, tossing the *bijou* volume upon the table desperately. "I can't think what will become of us when you are gone, and yet I doubt if you have many regrets."

"O Mr. Huntley, that is not kind! One does not go away from home without regrets. It is only the companionship of Mrs. Jennings and Clare that reconciles me to it at all."

It was not much to say, but she said it more warmly than she thought. There was another interval of silence, in which she felt his eyes upon her, and grew almost faint with dread, straining her ears in the desperate hope that some one would come. But no one did.

"And you have no idea when you may return," he continued, pathetically. "Mrs. Jennings speaks of spending several years abroad; should you remain so long away also?"

"O no! — that is, I think not. It will depend — I — I had not thought much about it."

She had struggled bravely to form a connected sentence, having all the time a shuddering consciousness that he had risen and come to her side; but for her life she could not raise her eyes. He stood there a moment, silent, and then spoke in low, tremulous tones that she long remembered.

"Miss Howland — Emma — do not go, or, if you will, let me go with you."

There it was! all she had feared and dreaded so much! What could she say? O for Mamma Jennings — anybody — or an earthquake! She made a mighty effort and met his eyes. There were tears in them, and this vanquished her.

"O Mr. Huntley, I am so sorry! I am afraid I did — did not understand."

He was on his knee and had her hand, kissing it softly and trying to catch her eye.

"My darling! may I tell you all?"

Something flashed and thundered in her brain. "Charley! Charley!" was its burden. She snatched her hand away with a shuddering spasm. "O no, no, no! forgive me, Mr. Huntley. I have been wrong. I did not dream until Mrs. Jennings told — I don't know what I am saying. Please leave me — some other time —" Her agitation was terrible; it frightened him, and he got up quickly.

"My dear Miss Howland, I beg your pardon. I have erred; forgive me, if you can; I shall not offend again. There, I see them coming; I will go away."

The sad, contrite tone reassured her and gave her strength to speak. "One moment, Mr. Huntley. It is I who should ask forgiveness. I fear I deceived myself and deceived you. I never supposed, never thought of you as anything more than a friend. I am very sorry — I beg —"

"Do not speak of it more, Miss Howland," he cried earnestly, and his struggle to look cheerful smote her to the heart; "save yourself any further pain. I forgot myself; will you forget that I did so? Even at my age," he added, with a sad smile, "men are not always masters of themselves, you see. I regret having given you a moment's pain; I shall have more —"

"O Mr. Huntley —"

"*C'en est fait!* they are coming in now. I shall not see them again. Will you please present my regrets? I shall go back to town to-night. May I ask it? Miss Emma, we shall still be good friends, shall we not?"

She gave him her hand quickly, and said through her tears, "Always! *always*, Mr. Huntley."

He pressed the hand to his lips, and she felt his tears fall on it. "Thank you! you are an angel, Miss Howland. Adieu!" And he was gone.

Mrs. Jennings, coming in, found Emma crying silently in her chair. "Hoity-toity! what 's this?" She had a shrewd suspicion what "it" was; she was only anxious to learn results. Emma got up and hid her head in the "mamma's" bosom with a sob.

"He has been here. I was so unhappy; but perhaps it was best I should tell him, after all. Was it not, mamma?"

"Of course it was, dear, and I had fairly given up the hope of balking such a very persistent gentleman. And what did the darling say?"

"I don't know; I can't remember, I was so startled; only he was so good and noble! He spared me all the pain, and has it all himself, poor man! I am so glad, though; we are going to be good friends *always!*"

Mrs. Jennings secretly elevated her brows to the extreme limit of their range, but patted the head on her shoulder kindly, and said, "I am glad it is over, dear. Now the ghost is laid, and we shall not have to be such schemers any more. It was high time, too; we must go to town next week and bid everybody good by; write a million letters, pack a million trunks, and receive a million commissions before we go down to the seas. There, dry those eyes, and no tales out of school to the girls; but I need not tell you that. Is Mr. Huntley coming to tea, as he promised?"

"No, he goes back to town, and I am to present his regrets."

"That is better. I suppose he has let his business go to the dogs, all for you, you invincible young woman! Never mind, he is not the one to go into a decline; and he will be a nice friend, even if he was such a dreadful lover."

There was, in truth, no incipient indication of a "decline" in Mr. Huntley's manner as he betook himself to town that night. One would have inferred, from the tenor of his thoughts, that he had secured much, if not all, he had hoped for in this superb final effort at the sea-shore.

"How the child trembled!" said the gentleman to himself, as deep in the delicious memory, and curled up in his seat, he sped through the night over the New Haven Road, "and what a darling she is! I called her an angel, and she *is* one: Lucifer ought to know. She will remember that, too, and the kisses on her hand, for she likes me — more than she knows. Bah! with a clear track I 'd win her in a month; but there 's that infernal European business —"

"TICKETS!"

"Allez au diable!"

The self-possessed functionary, not being conversant with the French tongue, only smiled blandly at the cross gent with the mustache; but he carried the memory of that cold, handsome face in his mind, which was a dictionary of faces, for months. "Not a nice boy when he is ugly, I should say," was his comment upon it.

The "European business" was, indeed, a subject of sore distress to the broker. With the perverse blindness of a lover he had all along refused to share the general belief in Emma's declining health. As her indisposition kept her out of society at Newport, he regarded it with a certain satisfaction, and Mrs. Jennings's unpleasant *exposé* of its causes had not tended to make him dwell much on the subject. Aside from this consideration, the foreign trip assumed the character of an imposition in his eyes; he gave the plan inelegant names, and chafed and fretted over it without having dared to venture an opposing word, and without arriving at any expedient for his own benefit. He could follow; but as his affairs stood at the moment it would be an irreparable damage to his business interests to leave them. Thus the pleasant thought he brought away from Newport was neutralized by opposing troubles, and he took his way down town the next morning in a feverish and gloomy state of mind.

Who is brave is fortune-favored, perhaps; but to be "born lucky" is better, as the world goes, than to be born rich. When Huntley arrived at his office, he found a note from Mr. Wales, begging his presence at the banker's at his convenience. There was no question of convenience in that and similar cases, however; he always went at once.

A great corporation of the Great West, driven to certain measures for the improvement of their commercial facilities, had need of money for their plans, — very much money, indeed, to raise which they issued bonds, published their resources, and came before the financial world as borrowers, in the usual way. It was desired to place a portion of the loan abroad, and Mr. Wales, in whose hands the matter rested, found himself in want of an able and clever agent to go out with the bonds. He bethought himself, at once, of Huntley.

"If you can arrange your affairs to that

end, and undertake the negotiation, it will be a service to us and an advantage to yourself. In any case, you will be compensated for your time, and, if successful, share the benefits. The company will allow you an eighth of one per cent as a commission on all sales at the agreed price; you know the quality of the bonds, and I think they will go off well, both in the English and German markets, even to the whole amount of six millions. Think it over, Mr. Huntley. I will only add that we will receive any transfers of account from you at our office, or otherwise assist your business, during your absence, with pleasure."

Mr. Huntley maintained a careful deference to appearances, and went away with due gravity of countenance to "think it over"; but in fact his heart had bounded at the proposition, and it was with some difficulty, as he subsequently assured the man in the glass, that he had restrained himself from "embracing the old brick on the spot!"

He accepted the agency promptly, and found nothing in the prospect to regret, except the fact that his departure must be postponed for some months. A single contingency now remained which was not pleasant to contemplate, — Miss Howland might meet her cousin in Paris. It was not possible to overestimate the danger of such an encounter; he trembled to think of it, and planned carefully to prevent it. A nice calculation based on Mrs. Jennings's itinerary, and giving the party a brief sojourn at London and Paris, got them safely *en route* for the South before the return of the fashionable world to the latter capital, and rendered it improbable that the travellers would encounter young Wales there, unless he were warned of their coming and hastened to meet them. To guard against this he wrote out in express terms to Somers: "If any letters arrive for him of later date than August 20, manage it that he does not get them; and if he should be in town, by any chance, in September, you must get him away. Move heaven and earth to prevent the *rencontre;* everything depends upon it. I leave it to you in confidence; will send more funds by the next steamer."

Further than this, he presumed upon "some acquaintance with the country" to give Mrs. Jennings advice touching her route of travel. "Considering Miss Howland's health, which, of course, is to be thought of *avant tout*, I should say it would not be well to remain at Paris later than the first week of October. Nothing could be more trying, I fancy, than the disagreeable and variable weather of that period; it often grows suddenly cold, and is invariably wet. Then it is not too early to start South, since, as you are situated, the long journey can be made leisurely, and making it thus you will find it very delightful. The beautiful Rhone Valley will be in its loveliest dress, — vineyards turning to gold, with distant mountains whitening with early autumn snows, and the softest, haziest skies in the world. It is a glorious country, and full of fascinations," continued the broker, warming with his memories; "I have walked every yard of it and recall it, with peculiar pleasure. You should stop at Dijon, which is one easy stage from Paris, and thence to Avignon, avoiding Lyons, which is uninteresting and unclean, and an infliction after Paris. The other towns are old, quaint places, and will amuse you, and the De la Cloche at the former, and Palais Royal at the latter, are fine specimens of the old-time provincial inns of France; they bear about the same relation to the vaunted English inns that a fine glass of Clos Vougeot does to a tankard of muddy beer. The ladies will find abundant matter for sight-seeing and enjoyment; the noble Rienzi's prison-house stands still at Avignon, I think; and, indeed, it is not possible to convey a foretaste of the peculiar charm of the country, which makes itself felt at every step. The very stones will sing to you, Miss Clare, that you are on the old 'road to Rome.' You must by no means omit to have 'Childe Harold' and Macaulay's 'Lays' in your handy-bag!"

"How delightful!"

"Once at Marseilles and on the Mediterranean, you will cease to regret Paris, if you have not already done so. There is a spell which hangs about the shores of that wonderful sea which is not to be described. Ah, those days! I am young again when I think on them!"

Mr. Huntley smiled curiously, while Clare sharply resented the imputation thus cast upon his youth. But it was very charming to listen to him when he talked thus; Clare was in ecstasies, and Emma listened with a soft smile that warmed the gentleman's heart. Once indeed Miss Jennings's impetuosity led to the expression of a wish that Mr. Huntley was going with them: "It would be so nice to have such — such a — "

"Courier!" he said, laughing. "I should be very happy in the office, happier than you think; but it is hardly possible. That I may pay you a flying visit during the winter is, however, quite probable."

"Is it, really? How glad I am!"

"Business," he added, smiling; "nothing more or less than your contemned element, Miss Clare, points to a voyage abroad for me in some months; and if I were sure it would be agreeable — "

"Are n't you ashamed, sir! naughty man! Of course, we should like — There, I 'll not flatter your conceit; but if you

are in Europe and do *not* come to see us — "

"Then it is settled," he cried, laughing. His little manœuvre had won a shy, pleased glance from Emma, and a flush to her cheek, and he was content. "Come I will, though the Alps were multiplied by hundreds! I shall find you all resplendent in Mentonnaise hats, and brown as berries with that Southern sun that penetrates everything. Miss Howland, you must promise me to get horribly tanned and very strong against my coming."

Emma blushed again, for the words concealed a tenderness beneath their gayety.

"So she shall!" cried Clare; "but do you remember Mentone, Mr. Huntley? is it a long time since you were there?"

"Ah! yes; I should frighten you if I told you how many years, but I remember it well; a little, sleeping town nestling about its one cathedral tower, as they all do, with splendid lines of mountain behind it, and a little, *two* little indented bays on either side, as blue as the ribbon in Miss Howland's hair. Rather soiled and dark the old houses are on close examination, and not always breathing of Araby; best looked at a pace or two away, as is everything in Italy, even to the incomparable *Seggiola* under the glass. These old places do not change, though modern accessories have crept in largely on the Riviera, by reason of the winter colony of foreign visitors; and our original, picturesque village is fringed with new villas and enormous hotels. The mountains, seamed with terraces of lemon and olive trees, and the curved beach strewn with boats and nets, are unaltered pictures, and the people themselves, peasants and fisher-folk, are just the same in dress and language as in the days of the Moor."

Clare filled the pause with a sigh: "O dear, I wish we were there now!"

"I am familiar by accident with Mentone; a land-slide on the Corniche cut me off there when *en route* for Lower Italy and the East, and our party found it so delightful that we lingered there many days. It was only a little fishing-village then, — Piedmontese, I think; but it had already two or three hotels, and its vicinity to Nice had brought it into some notice. It is a lovely spot; I can recall none which exceeds it in point of scenery and the dazzling transparency of the air; the hill-tops seem cut out from the blue sky beyond them. You find nothing like it below, until you reach Greece."

Mr. Huntley's glowing descriptions would be occasionally varied by discreet allusions to the danger and unpleasantness of Paris in the autumn, and his suggestions were so attentively received that he gathered much encouragement and satisfaction from his labors.

The party sailed in due course. The lover was kindness itself, and attentive to the last, performing a multitude of little services which were highly appreciated by the ladies. Towards Emma his manner was ever delicate and reassuring, and so full of guarded tenderness that the poor girl was made almost remorseful at times, and shed some secret tears over the thought that she had marred the happiness of such a noble soul. At the last moment on the deck of the steamer, when she gave him her trembling hand, and noted the struggle which was only too evident in his face, her own emotion had nearly vanquished her; he was singing for joy at the remembrance of the flooded eyes and faltering tones for days afterwards.

"Good by! Miss Emma, I shall watch the telegrams anxiously to hear of your safe arrival at Queenstown. A thousand good wishes! You must get quite well, you know; and beware of London and Paris. I shall see you again, perhaps, by the New Year."

"I sincerely hope so. I should be very glad. Good by! you have been so kind, I do not know how to thank you."

"You have more than done so; you have made me happy, for I still hope! *Au revoir!*"

And the strong pressure of his hand seemed to linger still when Fire Island light was a star on the horizon, and the homeland had sunk in the sea.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST STRAND.

THE heart of Madame la Concierge at the fine Haussmannic tenement in Boulevard Malesherbes was made glad in the early days of September by the return of Monsieur Somers. Delightful as was the gay life at Trouville, and brilliant as his career in that festive atmosphere had been, Monsieur Somers found it necessary to tear himself from the enchanted ground, and return to Paris after the sweet interval of three weeks. He had nobly fulfilled the duties of his position at the charming resort, however, and there remained to him in separating from its little world of light-hearted people the satisfaction of feeling that his departure was as triumphal as had been his *entrée*. He had religiously taken twenty-one surf-baths, eaten twenty-one excellent and sustaining dinners, involving the auxiliary item of forty-two bottles of very fair Bordeaux, danced at twenty-one delicious *soirées*, and flirted desperately but syste-

matically, as they do in France, with sixty-three alluring females, allowing a modest average of three *per diem*. Like the well-graced actor that he was, he left a melancholy void behind him, and came away glorified; duty called him to his post, and, greater than Hannibal in Capua, to his post went he.

It is scarcely worth while to allude to an indiscretion which might possibly have influenced his determination and led to his withdrawal in any case. He was not often guilty of indiscretions, it costs so little to be discreet also "in France"; but he was only mortal, and down at Trouville, among the other recreations, they sometimes indulge in a lively, private game of *baccarat;* and fancy *baccarat* with that ravishing creature, to whom you have just been making heated love in an alcove, gracefully taking the bank and inviting you, with a smile that kills, to *faire votre jeu!*

"By the sweet gods!" cried the gallant Somers afterwards, recounting certain experiences to Charley, "a man might have lost the Bank of England under the circumstances. They had me in for a hundred pounds before I knew it, but — I had my sport, *et que voulez-vous?*"

I say scarcely worth the while, because a note from Charley Wales saying that he should be in Paris by the 10th made it imperative for Somers to go up; questions of *baccarat*, pounds, shillings, and pence aside. For he had received the letter of instructions from New York, and had a charge to keep, debating the management of which he awaited the comer from Switzerland.

Charley burst in at the quarters on the day named; tired, car-dusted, but brown and handsome as the sun-god from the hills. Somers received him with high melodrama.

"Do my eyes deceive me? Is it some cruel, deceptive dream? Speak! thou spirit of the Alps!"

"*Rien qu'un mortel, mon ami*, and a deuced hungry one at that!" responded Charley, with a laugh; there was a new fluency in his French, that made Somers smile inwardly. "You poor boy! I believe you well. Three months of Gruyères cheese and mountain honey! I envy your appetite! *Dieu merci!* Paris is desolate, but Paris still dines. I am awfully glad to see you, though; came by Lyons, I suppose."

"No, Basle and Strasbourg, — strategetical lines, you know."

"To be sure, but it did n't matter. You know, I presume — "

"O yes! I know," said the young man, rather carelessly; "no escape for the wicked. I suppose they have had it pretty well out by this time, however, among themselves. I tell you what, I was never so near murdering any one as those sneaking clubmen; there 's a tail to that affair. *Mais enfin*, how about this dinner?"

"I know no word so joyful; let us away! Why! do you know, your welcome face has rescued me at the brink, plucked me from the Slough of Despond? It 's horrible here now; Paris is always horrible in September. One kind of everybody is out of town, and another kind is in; that is to say, every one you wish to see is away, and every one you particularly desire not to see arrives. Shall it be Voisin's? *Bien!* As I was saying, it is the heyday of tourists; the place is rammed and jammed with them, and my especial horror, the peripatetic parson, with blue spectacles and a red guide-book, runs you down in every corner; he is more numerous than the *sergents de ville*, and quite as ubiquitous. And your own countrymen swell the throng; to joke weakly, they make it more 'swell,' without making it less disagreeable. Fact is, I suppose, they are all migrating homewards at this time, and make a week in Paris a sort of crowning episode to their travels; they swarm by the cabful in the streets, crowd you into a corner at all the *cafés*, and turn the whole place into a menagerie of the nations. I always dread the time, and generally manage to avoid it. I have only just come up from Trouville."

"So I presumed. I fear I was the cause of tearing you from its delights."

"Not entirely; I should have come up any way, though it *was* jolly, — too jolly, if anything; one forgets the rules in such an atmosphere."

Later in the evening, when the gentlemen were enjoying a quiet hour of cigars and conversation in their quarters, Somers said, "I have n't ventured to ask if you have any plans; of course, you will not stay here through this epidemic of tourists for the next four weeks; going below, perhaps."

"No, I am *congé* until — until the Baronne comes to town," said Charley, awkwardly; "I *was* going down to do the Baron the honor of shooting over his domains, but it was arranged differently. To tell the truth, I did not care to go; I have n't lived in France like you, you know, for twenty years. I suppose there 's Cognac *là-dedans*," he added, going to the sideboard and drinking a liberal glass of the fine liquor. "Nina did not press it either, so I came here at the last moment. By Jove! this brandy is elixir after that horrible *eau de vie de raisin* one gets in Switzerland!"

"I believe you, and Madame will come up early, *sans doute*. You left her well?"

"Charming! She said she should come by the end of October. By Jove! Ned —

bah! No! I don't want to stay here; what can we do?"

"Do? Fifty things! anything but remain here. You make me live again. I was afraid you would want to plant yourself in town, and live on sighs and palpitations until — *Allons!* what do you say to Brussels, — *belle Bruxelles?* I know it well, and it's nice; if there were no Paris, there would be only Brussels, Bois de la Cambre, and Waterloo. We can kill time there and thereabouts, and dodge the excursionists, have a look at König Wilhelm at Spa, and, if you fancy it, a run down among those fine old ancestral connections of you New-Yorkers, who go to the beaver in place of the bee."

"Anything you like; you repudiate Trouville, I observe."

"Ah! it would n't suit you now; chorus of mermaids at the tenth hour, recitations in sentiment till dinner, with slow music and *même-chose*, intensified by wine, truffles, and gaslight up to any hour afterwards, — 'all things common else' for you, old fellow. Only the worn veteran like me, *vois-tu*, whose 'young dreams' have become middle post nightmares, may cheat himself with a transient flicker in the ashes when Aphrodite is *chez-elle* by her native element, and the accessories are pretty. *I* was rejuvenated at Trouville; *you* would be horribly *gêné*."

"'Most reverend Nestor! Let me embrace thee, good old chronicle, that hast so long walked hand in hand with Time.' As you elect, however; Brussels be it!"

"'Up men, and at 'em!' Shall we go over to-morrow?"

"The sooner the better, I should say; you have made me really nervous about exposing myself to the army of invasion hereabouts."

"As well you may be; I shudder to think of your fate if you fell in with Brown and Jones — "

"'Thompson' *vous-voulez dire?*"

"Exactly; 'acquaintances from home,' and the course of whiskey, Avenue Montaigne, and *après quoi* they would drag you through with all the national *ardeur! Apropos*, I had a young Cockney consigned to me early in the summer, — a rare circumstance, I am happy to say, — tourist in embryo, but will be a marvel of his species if he lives. I concentrated all Paris for him into two hours of cab, dinner at Bignon's, and 'Bullier' in the evening, and packed him off for Italy the next day. I thought the world might escape him, through the happy instrumentality of the Maremma, — fancy Rome in July! — but he burst in on me here four days ago, and delivered himself of all Italy, from Vesuvius to the Simplon, in a solid hour of the Holborn vernacular. He was evidently under the impression that no one in modern times had ever 'swam in a gondola' but himself; but I put a wedge in his conceit by assuring him that in having failed, as he acknowledged with confusion and regret, to look up Van Dyck's portrait of the Wandering Jew in the Uffizi, he had missed the finest thing in Italy. It poisoned all his *souvenirs*, and my revenge was delicious!"

They went next day to Brussels, where a fortnight sped pleasantly. Then they looked in at Spa, and found it rather dry; so they came back and took the "run" down through the Low Countries, for the fat cattle and very fat good people of which Somers's enthusiasm knew no bounds. After this the excursion took a wider scope, and they found themselves drifting up the Rhine country, glorious in autumnal dress, and straying in at Homburg and Baden, where the summer season was in its last agonies. It was all so pleasant, and made to cover such a deal of time, that Charley awoke one day with a start of surprise at the fact that the "end of October," which had seemed so far away, was close at hand, and he came back to Paris at top-speed and in something of a flutter. Nor was he more than prompt; on the same day the household in the Avenue de la Reine Hortense was called upon to receive its mistress.

Some days after his return Charley strolled in at his banker's, where his appearance created an unmistakable sensation. He stopped, as one learns to do, by the register, and ran a swift, careless glance over the long lists of arrivals, going back over the weeks of his absence. An entry — he all but missed seeing it — caught and fixed his eye: —

Mrs. Charles Jennings and family, New York, Hotel Westminster.

Miss Emma Howland, New York, Hotel Westminster.

He read the names twice, with a glad thrill at first, with a sinking of the heart at the last.

Some one at his elbow asked, "Mr. Wales, is it not?"

One of the principals was standing by him with a letter in his extended hand.

"It was privately enclosed, with instructions to deliver to you personally. You are quite a stranger with us, Mr. Wales."

"I have been out of town — thank you. Is — are the party — I would say Mrs. Jennings, still in the city?"

"No; they remained a short time only, and went South about the 20th, I think. Asked several times after you, but, as you are aware, we could give them no information."

"Yes — ah — you have their address?"

"Nice, I believe; or no, Mentone. —

Briggs, what is the address of Mrs. Jennings and party of New York?"

"Mentone, Alpes Maritimes, sir."

"As I thought; there was a young lady with them in poor health, I believe. Beg pardon! What did you say?"

"Nothing — that is — they left no message for me, I suppose?"

"None beyond the expression of great regret at not finding you here, as they had evidently expected to do."

Charley struggled to ask one more question: "You saw Miss Howland, I presume."

"I did not have the pleasure, I regret to say. She did not call at the bank, and I was not able to see her when I paid my respects at the hotel. She was poorly on the voyage, I understood, and the journey South was pushed on her account."

"Thank you," said Charley, turning to go.

"When it is convenient, Mr. Wales, there are some rather important matters of business — "

"I will see you to-morrow, sir." And without more words the young man, unable any longer to command his emotions, hurried into the street and to his apartments. He had glanced at the letter, and, recognizing his father's writing, had simply crushed it in his hand, as he made his way homeward. Once there he dropped in a seat.

"Emma here! gone South, and ill, and not a word or a line to me!"

Then he tore open the note hurriedly, in response to a sudden, crushing thought, and found his answer there. It was a brief one, but he read but half of it. What he read was this: —

"Your conduct seems to indicate a persistent intention to alienate yourself utterly from your family and friends, and I have ceased to hope that my admonitions can influence you. But I make a final request, that you will so far respect the feelings of your cousin, who is going abroad in broken health, as to conceal from her your disreputable connections, of which she, at present, knows nothing. You would best do so by avoiding a meeting with her. I have only to add that the property descending to you from your mother and grandfather has been placed at your disposal, through the Messrs. Tompkins, and is put entirely beyond my control — "

He stopped here, letting the crushed paper fall to the floor, and rose mechanically to his feet just as Somers came in at the door. The Bohemian was frightened by his face.

"Hallo! I say — my dear boy, is it bad news?"

The presence of the man strengthened Charley. "Bad is not the word," he said hoarsely, and, striding over to the cabinet, he drank off a great draught of brandy at a single swallow. Then he looked hard at Somers with unmeaning eyes, and added greatly to the alarm of that gentleman by laughing in a wild, discordant way.

"Why, Charley!" cried Somers, gently, "what is it, old fellow? Can I help you?"

"Listen, Somers," said Charley, in a tone that made the trained man of the world tremble for a moment where he stood, "I don't know much about you, but I suspect you would hardly go straight to Heaven for your good works, eh?"

"Devil a bit, I fear; but Charley —"

"Never mind, I have been hit hard. I used to be one of your good boys, I did, by G—d! But there was something undivine that shaped *my* end. Look here! there *was* one thing left in the world I cared about, — cared about more than I knew till just now. It would have kept me always from going too low, I think; but they have cut me out of that!"

"But, my dear old boy — "

"Listen, let 's have a clear understanding and no mistakes. I like you well enough, and I don't want to be a nuisance to you; but I tell you, Ned, I am going the whole pace from this out. It 's the only thing left, and I 've got the money."

"All right, old fellow. It is not Ned Somers who will cry cover, be your game what you like." Somers spoke cheerily, but he was watching the young man closely, and whirled a chair under him just as he sank down, overcome by the combined effect of liquor and excitement. Then he put his hand on Charley's shoulder, and spoke earnestly, "I am your man for anything you like, Charley; but it 's a mistake to take these things too bitterly to heart. You say you are hit hard. I don't know how, and it 's none of my business, but I am sorry. I caught it pretty bad myself at your age. My God! what are you to do with the chances at twenty-five? I took it badly, too, though I am not so prone to do so as you, perhaps; but I had n't a friend in the world then, in my strait, — *et voilà!* I have pulled through pretty well, have n't I? My good fellow! these yelping curs that hound down a man for some slip in life run nine in ten 'guiltier than him they try.' Don't give them the chance to think you felt the cut; that 's the true philosophy of it. Come, we must go and breakfast, and send something after that liquor, or it will play the deuce with your head. We 'll talk it out afterwards, and you will find Ned Somers with you, heart and hand, in anything you elect."

He got the young man on his feet, and, subsequently, to the Helder, where he tempted him with an exquisite *déjeuner*, and with ultimate success. In all his life

Somers had never felt an impulse so thoroughly unselfish and sympathetic as in that moment, when he read the old story of shipwreck which he knew so well in Charley's white, stricken face. He had had excellent opportunities latterly to find out more fully "what the young fish was made of," and the result was an admiration and liking for Charley such as he had never given to any other man, regarding, as he did, the whole sex as his natural enemies. And there was an unmistakable effort of conscience in his soul just now. He saw in Charley's distress only Huntley's handiwork, and cursed that gentleman soundly in his heart for the same. He also felt his own connivance, and felt it sharply, though all in the dark as to its actual gravity and consequences, and he made a desperate resolve.

Half-way down a bottle of Margaux he asked Charley, guardedly, "Heard from Huntley lately?"

"No; not in an age. I wonder at it, too, since — I suppose," added Charley, catching himself, "he is over head and ears in business."

"*Tant mieux* for him, though I should think he might find time to write you, such friends as you seem to have been."

"Good fellow is Dick," said Charley, carelessly, and drinking his wine rather freely. "But perhaps he has gone along with the rest of them; does n't like my 'connections,' you know. Bah! let us not visit the good people, even in our thoughts, lest we should incommode them! Order another bottle, will you, please? By Jove! I believe I am engaged to ride with the Baronne at three. I had nearly forgotten it."

Somers had had it on his tongue's end to make a clean breast of the whole business, so far as his connection with it went, and show up Huntley in his true colors to Charley. The words had fairly trembled on his lips; but it required no little resolution to speak them, and the momentary diversion occasioned by the young man's words led to hesitation, and the hesitation demoralized him. The brave resolve faded, as it had arisen, in a moment.

"It could scarcely have altered things *now*," said he to himself, as he sauntered upon the Boulevard, after parting from Charley. His predominant sensation was one of relief, and he recognized the interposition of chance as a saving demonstration of some superior intelligence. "It certainly would not have helped *my* case. *Eh bien, laisser aller!*"

And the probabilities involved in the future pursuance of this maxim of life, touching himself and Charley Wales, formed the subject of his afternoon meditations, as he bent his steps towards the club-rooms in the Rue Scribe. Arrived there, however, he did not enter, but, acting upon a sudden thought, walked on to the Malesherbes, where he went up to the pretty parlor, and with some inconvenience fished out from under the massive sideboard a crumpled bit of paper. His quick eye had caught it when he had come in and found Charley so disturbed, and his equally quick foot kicked it, unperceived, out of sight. It was the letter with which the reader is familiar, and which he now spread out and read without scruple. He was much perplexed by its contents, as was very evident from his countenance.

"It 's the old gentleman, of course, though he does n't subscribe himself 'your loving father,' or any of that sort of thing. 'Cousin,' eh? Whole party safe out of Paris, as I knew before we left Baden. I suppose it is all here, but I can't make it out. Something between the girl and Charley, perhaps. I 'd have sworn to a woman *somewhere*, by his face this morning. But what can Dick Huntley possibly have to do in such a case? He might — no, he would n't dare!" He paced up and down for some time in silent meditation. "Just as well I did n't peach," he continued, presently. "He 's the Devil's own Jack at a turn, is Dick. 'Gad! I am frightened to think how near it I was. No, no, Edward, thou must look to thyself first, *en tout cas*. I 'm sorry, though, for the boy — such a boy as he is, too; ''t is ever thus below, the noblest and the bravest,' etc., *par exemple!*"

And with this bit of melancholy merriment he cut short his ruminations. He put the letter where Charley would find it. "The business instructions must be noted. By Jove! the figures are handsome," was his commentary. And, catching a glimpse through the *persiennes*, at that instant, of an inviting apparition in purple and velvet, which stirred a memory of Trouville, he seized his hat again, gave a twirl to the blonde whiskers, and hurried down to the pleasant street of palaces.

"Eh bien! laisser aller!" The words echoed still in the bright, pretty room when he was gone. The man, his nature, and his life were pictured and embodied in the text.

Out in a shaded byway of the Bois the elegant landau of Madame la Baronne Choisy crept lazily down the long line of tall, dark trees, whose turning leaves trembled and glistened far above in the latest rays of an October sun. A marvellous *ensemble;* an equipage which typified luxury; a collocation of animate and inanimate things, forming an intelligent and respon-

sive whole, governed by the mistress-will. The grand, high-spirited bays, instinctively self-restrained and walking gravely, almost softly, under the trees; the two bolt-upright figures on the box, which might be men or statues in their graven immobility; the soft-cushioned, soft-tinted interior, eloquent, in itself, of the sweet myth called Ease.

The two who sat within were silent, and wrapt in thought. Nina was leaning back, and gazing dreamily away over the tree-tops, not unhappily, it would seem, from the shadow of a smile that played about her mouth. Charley's eyes, wandering also with a certain feverish restlessness, came back and rested on the beautiful siren-face, until that strange magnetism of the human eye won an answering gaze from the Baronne, whose smile deepened then into one soft, passionate, winning beyond words.

He turned towards her, and gathered up the little hand which lay so softly in her lap. She caught it away with the same silent smile, tore off the pretty glove with one swift wrench, and put it back in his own, bare, warm, and rosy.

"Nina," he said, in a low tone, that made her look more closely and seriously in his eyes, "do you remember once in Switzerland telling me that I must surrender all the world, everybody, everything, for you, and then being very cruel to me because I begged a reservation?"

"*Mais oui, monsieur!* you were *méchant;* you broke my heart. I do not forget it!"

"*Pauvre petite chérie! ecoute-toi,* to-day I surrender it, Nina; to-day and forever I am all your own!"

She sprang forward with a great flash of joy in her face, and studied his an instant, as if to read the full truth there, while a last, lingering shadow stole out of her glad heart, a shadow which had stubbornly kept its place and poisoned her happiness. It was all gone now; she kept her swimming eyes on his, drew his hand to her heart, and her lips murmured softly, "*Bébé!*"

And he leaned down and kissed her silently.

The statues on the box gazed ever in the air, the big bays tramped onward with stately grace, and up above the yellow leaves flashed and quivered in the sunset.

CHAPTER XV.

THE "WHOLE PACE."

THE winter that followed was one of undiminished glory and popularity for the Baronne Choisy. Her empire remained undisputed, her court as numerous and as devoted as before. The splendor of her entertainments was the marvel and delight of Paris; her presence, the coveted guaranty of success in all social enterprises; and her box at the thronged opera the very centre from which radiated that subtle, electric current which sets in motion the delicate machinery of society. The world in which she moved seemed at her feet, governed by her caprice, and flattered by her very breath; and in that French day of days, *le Jour de l'An*, she might have sat upon a throne and defied the simple fashion-leader of the Tuileries to match her overflowing court. And yet there was a shadowy transformation as, when the curtain rises upon a new act on our mimic stage, we see only the self-same *mise en scene*, the self-same players, but note at once a new disposal. Some of the outward circle have come within, some moved a little apart. The play goes on, and in the swift unravelling of the little plot the central figures come more fully before us in their individual parts; we are stirred with new and startling chords, with wild, sweet melodies, that speak to all the emotions of the human heart, and blind us, in our enjoyment, to the shadow of the *dénouement;* but over all lurks the saddening thought that the two or three copyists of life to whom, in the opening, we lent our ready sympathies, have copied only too well, and are dooming us to a destruction of our hopes.

The world gazed with a single eye still on Nina Choisy, but not as before, and she saw and felt the change. She saw it among her own sex in the new-found confidence with which some drew nearer, in the careful delicacy with which others fell away; and in the unembarrassed abandonment of that thin mask of hesitating reserve among the men, she saw it still more plainly. A nameless tone that this society had once possessed for her it possessed no longer.

Luxurious, reckless, even depraved as may have been the social circles of the Paris of that day, some good lingered in her gilded *salons*. There was respect inviolate beneath the sneer at virtue, and a pang followed the cold laugh at truth; no man was altogether dead to its presence, no woman could be callous to its loss, and where it moved it was known and felt, valued by most, feared by all.

Nina had lived proudly in her conscious superiority, and found delight in keeping that wolfish world at bay. She could do so no longer in the same spirit, and she felt the change, but only as a change; in her heart regret and bitterness had no place. She had given her all, but she had received an all in return, and she was content.

And as we see her, she was still a queen in her world, and a queen she would remain

to the end; there was in her nature no atom of that sensuous grossness which could ever reduce her below the level of the best of her class. Wise questions for men to argue, which they have argued since Solomon in the vain hope to prove the woman as bad as themselves.

She was happy, — briefly, guiltily, but as completely as it is often allotted to a child of earth to be. Those three summer months in Switzerland had been one swift, golden dream in which every hope of her life, the girl-visions of earlier days, had the fullest fruition. In Charley the old, romantic ideal was swallowed up in a far more splendid reality. Young, noble in nature, with warm strong passions like her own, and much of the same graceful refining sentiment which clothed her dreams; that fine, imaginative faculty which, being unearthly, gives a better color to earthly things; he was all she had craved, more than she had ever dared to hope for. They lived through those days like nature's children, where nature had rolled a wilderness of grand old hills about them, shutting out the prying world beyond; and when, in the inevitable course of things, that world found them out, Nina, who reasoned while Charley slept his guilty sleep, sighed a tearful farewell to the hour of Paradise, and nerved herself to hold fast the substance of her happiness whose first, brief glamour was gone. She came back to her place in the field with the strong woman's heart braced for the contest she now foresaw; and though there were moments when the sweet vision of lover's life, of long, beautiful years of unbroken intercourse with him alone in some unnoticed corner of earth, arose in her brain, she dismissed them calmly, as became the woman of the world, to whom the fancy was no longer illusive. Readily, however, as she did this, she could never contemplate the possibility of a change, of separation, of any pause, indeed, in this new life. Her worldly prescience was all at fault, and she shrank from the thought of a future without him; it had been her one uneasy, haunting fear, that he retained other ties in life which might some day prove stronger than that which bound him to her. Her joy at his declaration in the Bois may then be imagined; it was beyond all speech, and found expression only in the low-spoken pet-name and the offered lips.

If, from this day, she found an alteration in him, a new, almost fierce intensity at times, coupled with reckless *abandon*, she construed it gladly as a new proof that he had wholly embraced his *sort*. He threw himself into the glittering life (for in all places and at all times he was the Baronne's recognized and envied attendant) with careless ease, with a certain grace, indeed, that won the admiration of the clever and critical circles in which they moved, and gave him a new charm in Nina's fond eyes. The *beau petit Puritain*, at whom she had sometimes made a laughing *moue*, had disappeared, and given place to the *homme de cœur*, sufficiently inflamed for even the Parisian taste. No wonder that men found a new charm in her, that in the glowing atmosphere of the Hotel Choisy the wild, gay world revelled with an added *élan* and forgot to pine for old Versailles and naughty Regents. The tropic glories of the Second Empire centred there, and thence distributed their intoxicating influence. Antony sat down again with Egypt, and the mad throng gathered to the feast.

Paris gossiped bravely over *ce jeune Americain*, who drove his grand trotters in the Avenue de l'Imperatrice with such resistless dash, and who infused a rare animation into a certain coterie of distinguished sportsmen by unprecedented figures at the card-tables of the club.

"*On dit*," said one, levelling his lorgnette at the Baronne's box, between the acts at the Italien, "that he lost a hundred thousand to Count Brié."

"*Voyons!* a hundred and fifty. Somers told me so himself."

"*Sapristi! mais comment cela?* it is then the American Crœsus!"

"*Sais pas;* his horses shame the stables at St. Cloud, and they say a *petit souper* he gave at the Maison Dorée after the last Opera Ball was made to cost twenty thousand."

"*Incroyable! Mais oui;* they were at the ball together, I was told, — he and the Baronne."

"Yes; and Somers *sur le plancher* in Roman dress. He was superb; all the party were in costume save Madame and the American."

"*Joli cela!* and you saw them?"

"I saw Somers, he was magnificent; and Brié and old Goujon *à la Grand Turc* and Marie Velours. *Diable!* it was an adventure! Me, I was struggling to reach an outlet, when I received a tremendous thrust in my side from the elbow of a robust gentleman in splendid evening dress. You should have seen him, — the lace shirt-front and diamonds, satin-faced waistcoat, and Kiemel's best coat quilted with *glacé* silk! I turned in a rage, and met that round laughing face with the thick blond curls parted to the side like a boy's. It was Madame Marie, and I had only to kiss the floor, while Somers, *en service*, was near dying with laughter!"

"I fancy you, and the Baronne —"

"In a box with Monsieur and some others. I did not see her."

"Studying for the *masque, sans doute,*

which was celebrated at the Hotel Choisy a week later."

"You were there?"

"No, Brié told me something of it; but it beggared description. The American was Antinous in the scanty garb of Egypt, clothed in a brown dye, Brié said; and the Baronne an antique *Helléniste*, white toga or something, shell cameos and tiara and sandals, with bare arms and bare ankles bound in broad gold bands."

"Ciel! que j'eusse òu!"

The noble Somers was in clover in these days, as may be imagined; the rejuvenating influence of merry Trouville was a trifle compared with the happy infusion of spirits which he experienced in his active participation in Charley's dashing career, for he was still our hero's faithful companion in arms. He was afflicted by no more twinges of conscience, since never after that memorable day had he detected the faintest indication of a wound or bitterness in Charley's manner or words. If he reasoned upon the matter at all, it was not with a view to discover if the young man's course of life was prompted by any secret trouble. On the contrary, it was to arrive invariably at the satisfactory conclusion that "the boy" had immensely improved his condition in life and escaped that premature repression of the mercurial tendencies which in his eyes was the greatest misfortune of existence.

"'Gad! this is the sort of thing!" would be his unspoken thought, as he sat by Charley and was whirled out the Neuilly way behind the trotters, admired of all beholders. "Fancy him tied to an apron-string, and walking the dull, domestic beat; and he might have been, and known no better. A trifle too much of the spur, perhaps," he would further reflect, in the quietude of their chambers; "but he rides well, and nothing shakes him. It will all come right, nothing more certain. We shall have him duly installed in the seigniorial dignities one of these days, and everybody will live happy ever afterwards. Why does n't the 'stomach' die now? *Mais enfin!* It can't be long, and what a revolution we will work then in the *ménage* down below! I thrill at the thought, — boar-steaks and the Burgundy of untold ages! Compiègne shall hide its diminished head. *En attendant, pas trop vite!*"

Let us give Somers due credit, too, for a certain unperceived, but really judicious guidance of Charley's course. It was due to him that the experiments at *écarté* were less frequent than they otherwise would have been, and far less costly than he, in a moment of mischievous exaggeration, had led the oracle of the opera-stall to believe; and in many other ways did he shrewdly thwart Charley's occasional tendency to excess. The young man's career was in all general respects sufficiently electrical to warrant, perhaps, the sententious commentary of the wise men that he was "going *there* by the early train"; but it was many shades less meteoric than it might have been but for the influence of the easy-going yet philosophical Englishman. Somers was not precisely a saving agent, but he was still alive to the propriety of observing limitation in all things.

The winter months sped in their giddy pace, with no respite or pause for Charley, atom as he was in the dizzy whirl of Paris life. If graver thoughts and memories sometimes struggled for a hearing in his heart, he was amply supplied with means for their repression, and too thoroughly under the spell as yet to hesitate in availing himself of these means. His devotion to Nina was all she could demand. The air brought her more than one whisper of a rival, but her unerring instinct proved the whisper false, and kept her secure in her content, and in the assurance of his protecting constancy. I use the word *protecting*, because she had seen nothing so quickly, felt nothing so keenly, in her changed state, as the presence in the smooth world about her of more than one watchful soul ready at the instant of her lover's disgrace to rush to the siege where the citadel frowned down on them no longer. It needed no dramatic episode to attest the entire fealty and the chivalrous nature of her chosen knight; nothing was needed, indeed, to add to the passionate gratification of the hour or feed the brief delirium in which she lived. She thought little of the future; or, if she did, it was as a far end to the glowing present, and that end was death.

Among the *habitués* of the Hotel Choisy, and prominent in her circle, moved an Italian nobleman, tolerated by reason of his position, feared in a measure, perhaps, by reason of his high diplomatic connections, but universally detested for himself. He was, in fact, an embodiment of the least amiable characteristics of his nation, combining a Machiavelian *cynisme* with that haughty air of superiority which is almost a national characteristic of Italians. Profoundly indifferent as Charley was to the mass of fashionables he encountered in Nina's *salons*, he had conceived an instinctive dislike for this man from the first, avoiding him when it was possible, and when brought into contact with him displaying a marked contempt for his dignity. His antagonism was not diminished by a pettish declaration of Nina's that she "could not endure the creature — *mon Dieu! comme il est noir!*" And from that time his contempt speedily hardened into animosity. Herein, however, he was at a vast disadvantage. In the delicate

war of words of a French *salon*, the victories were ever with the cunning Neapolitan, who hid his passion beneath the smooth exterior of the diplomat, while he revenged himself without mercy on the aggressor. Charley grew desperate over the grievance. "I wish the wretch would give me a chance!" he said to Somers, savagely, over their absinthe at the Malesherbes, — for Charley had learned long since to ignore the "poisonous" qualities of that beverage; "deuce take him! He 's as smooth as oil, and as round-cornered as your pipe-bowl, with all his gall. I am at a loss how to insult him!"

Somers earnestly deprecated this warlike tendency, and had watched it nervously. "Pshaw! I wonder you can notice such small game," he said, rather sharply; "let him have his corner and snarl, he hurts nobody, and every one detests him. Cynna is not a success in Paris."

"But he is positively disagreeable to Nina."

Somers looked vexed and serious. "Well, you have made the man bold; I could have told you as much; but he will not dare pass the mark if you will let him alone. I don't suppose you will; but Charley —" The speaker paused at the name.

"Well?" asked the latter, impatiently.

"In any case, keep your head; don't, for God's sake, give him choice of weapons!"

Perhaps, in his wisdom, Somers had hoped to startle Charley into discretion. His lack of success may be inferred from the fact that the very contingency he hinted at arrived the same evening.

It was a crowded *soirée* at the Baronne's, and Charley, entering late, felt an angry flush rise to his face as he caught sight of the Baronne herself undergoing an evident infliction of acerbity at Martini's hands. He crossed over quickly, and was first perceived by the Italian, whose venom for once overflowed, either by accident or intention. "*Ah, voilà!* the happy man! *c'est Paris qui arrive!*"

Charley turned scarlet, and Nina flashed into momentary passion. "Mais! c'est une bêtise!"

The Italian paled slightly, but met Charley's blazing eyes with his invariable, cynical smile and a low bow. "Madame is severe: virtue is ever severe; her words admit of no reply."

Charley found his voice at last, though his teeth ground as he spoke, and it was in his native tongue. "You dog! if I find you here in ten minutes, I will hurl you from the window!"

The words were perfectly understood, and Martini bowed again with the same set smile, consulted his watch with perfect *nonchalance*, and sauntered easily away. He paused to exchange some words with two or three groups, as he moved down the parlors, but in ten minutes he was gone.

Nina was terrified, but brave.

"I feared it, *mon ami;* something you said at the club has reached him, and he was furious."

"And insulted you therefore! It was a brave thing to do!"

"A bold thing, *bébé*, with you standing by," she said in a low tone to calm him, smiling the while, though her heart was cold with fear.

He made no reply, — she was not sure he heard her, — but looked at her a moment, and then turned to go. She caught his arm; it was horrible to have that chattering, moving throng about them then.

"You will come back? to-night? soon?"

"Yes."

He was gone the next instant, and she was left to mask the terror at her heart before all those eyes. It was a bitter task; and though the altercation had escaped notice, it was universally felt that a cloud had fallen on the entertainment, which broke up an hour earlier than usual. Charley's disappearance, too, was noticed, and people wondered and suspected and suggested for three whole days, after which they said in unison, "I thought as much."

At the Malesherbes there was a council of war. Charley drank brandy and was furious; Somers smoked and was cool.

"By Jove! I don't mind telling you I expected it, and I was overjoyed to hear only this morning that the man was going to another post at Vienna in a week, — a week too late, of course. Why don't you sit down?"

"I can't. I won't rest till I meet him."

"Bah! you must wait his message. I won't have it otherwise; that 's flat. Let me manage it. Why, he 'd have you crossing blades, and I suppose you are about as familiar with them as with boomerangs!"

"Just about; I should not care, — the dog!"

"*Pas d'emotion!* You can shoot?"

"Yes."

"Of course; let us hope you are a Natty Bumpo. No disposition to an arrangement?"

"What?"

"Questions of apologies, etc."

"You are mooting impossibilities, Ned."

"Well, well, it requires no more discussion. Leave the rest to me, and don't make a mountain of it, you know; you will stop here to-night?"

"No."

"*Place aux* — But you must n't worry your nerves. Come around early." Somers looked grave after Charley left him; graver than he had before. "I don't like

it any the better for having foreseen it; and if the Italian *should* wait for *our* message! That would be checkmate out and out."

But the Italian did not wait; he summoned Monsieur Wales promptly to the field, and Somers felt something like relief when his messenger arrived. Between the latter, a gallant veteran of Montebello, with a head well seasoned to Somers's cognac and a delightful enthusiasm for his office, and the genial "Hercules," matters were quickly arranged; while Charley, escaping from Nina, was struggling to master an intelligent thought in his own room. Somers, looking in, saw him writing at his table, and withdrew at once. He allowed him only a brief space, however, and entered again in half an hour's time in a businesslike way. The notes were finished and sealed, and Charley sat in his chair gazing absently at the window, with traces of recent tears in his eyes.

"Done, I see. *Bon!* I am to take these, I suppose?" said Somers, brusquely, gathering up the notes. He noticed curiously but quickly the same name upon one of them that had graced the letter which he found in the secretary in the summer and forwarded to Huntley. Huntley would never get this one, he thought. "Come! breakfast and a turn on the road afterwards is the order of the day."

Charley got up mechanically, but shook off his dulness by an effort as they emerged into the street.

"It 's all arranged, I suppose?" he asked.

"All; Vincennes at sunrise in the approved style; pistols at thirty paces, and, as I trust, *rognons sautés* and Clos Vougeot at the Helder afterwards."

Somers spoke lightly, but watched the effect; apparently he was satisfied, as he rattled off at once on other things, as they proceeded to Voisins. He gave Charley little rest during the day; they called a moment at Vasour's, and drove a long two hours in the cold afterwards, coming home to the Malesherbes in the early winter twilight.

"You will dine with me, of course," Somers said.

"I must go to the Hotel," Charley replied.

Somers looked worried.

"Excuse me, Charley, but I don't like that. I must go with you."

"If you like," was the answer in rather indifferent tones; indeed, since the morning, the young man had remained rather impassive, and Somers did not quite like it.

"By the way, here are my pistols."

Charley looked at them with a momentary spasm of interest.

"They are beauties," he said.

"A nice pair; I had them of an old Indian friend who had faced the cat of the jungle with them after his rifle went wide; you can trust them."

Before they left for the Baronne's, Charley said suddenly to Somers, "About those notes, Ned; if there is no occasion to send them, just burn them, please; don't give them back to me."

"As you like."

Somers's heart was relieved of a misgiving when, on their arrival at the Hotel Choisy, Nina met them with a matchless assumption of gayety, and in the brightest of dresses. He read and felt what an effort it cost the poor woman, and fairly reverenced her for it. But he permitted no relaxation of the *rôle*, and with his persistent and indomitable *bonhomie* made the hour one of lively, almost careless *causerie*, and at its end arose abruptly.

"*Allons!* we must hunt a dinner, Monsieur Wales. I lead no empty warrior to the field, *moi*. *Fais tes adieux!*"

Nina sprang up and came across to him.

"Let me go with you; I will be good!"

He would have been a man of much sterner stuff than friend Somers, who could resist the look and tone of the suppliant siren. Still he began dubiously, "Mais, ma chere Baronne, vous savez —"

"*Oui, je sais bien*, you will have no fault to find with me; I *will* go!"

And she ran away to arrange her toilet, while Somers shrugged his massive shoulders and sighed an immense sigh.

"O these women! They do what they like with us. *En passant*, I see, Charley, that Suwaroff has made a famous haul *chez* Monsieur Blanc, where the mountains look down upon Monaco and Monaco looks on the sea, — half a million, they say, in a week's playing. You remember her at Baden, she is the born queen of diamonds; to remodel the adage, I should say she was born under a lucky card. Singular people, these *trente-et-quarante* professionals; I have always thought some of them had acquired the trick of beating the table. I knew a half-pay captain who has made it furnish him a first-class living at Baden for fifteen years, to my certain knowledge. I think I pointed him out to you. I asked him once over the third bottle how the thing was done. '*Voyez, mon ami*,' says he, 'I play all the days five hundred francs. If I lose, I stop; if I win, I stop also.' I did n't see it very clearly, but I followed the rule for three days. I lost a thousand in the two first; on the third I won ten thousand, lost them again and five more in desperation. I suppose I did n't know where to 'stop.' Ah! *voilà* madame!"

Nina entered in charming street dress,

and laughing gayly at Somers's last words.

"Fancy Hercules 'in desperation'! What a colossal emotion! Was it an *affaire du cœur, par exemple*, in which you did 'not know where to stop'? *Fi donc!*"

"Ah, madame, where I have loved, cruel fate has ever stopped me short of my hope!"

"Pauvre 'petit'!" cried the Baronne with a little laugh. The next instant being for a moment in the shadow of the vestibule, she caught Charley's hand with a convulsive clasp and carried it to her lips.

"You are not sorry to have me go with you, *bébé?*" she asked.

The reply was not in words, but she shuddered to find it restrained, almost cold.

Their dinner, in the luxurious privacy of a *cabinet* at Laurent's, was a rare feast, which approached a frolic, as the watchful Somers had determined it should. Beneath his irrepressible gayety, re-enforced by rich wines and tempting dishes, there remained no tenable ground for sober thoughts, and the single serious episode which marked the occasion was a momentary affectation of melancholy on his own part when he reverted to his forlorn state as the "unmated third"; and this was so far from serious that Nina laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks at his grotesque face.

"How desolate he looks! *Cherchons une Omphale pour notre Alcide!*"

"*Une?*" cried Charley, joining in the feverish merriment. "*Voyons!* nothing short of a *demi-douzaine* of the nymphs of Trouville would suffice his expansive heart, — *pas moins!*"

"Or all the Muses for variety! I believe well the brave man has found them all in Paris!"

"*Chère madame!* a single face, a single memory, is enshrined in the sanctuary of my heart —"

"*Mon Dieu!* what a waste of space! It is an untenanted cathedral; St. Peter's with a solitary vestal at the fount!"

"'*Ich habe gelebt und geliebt,*' and I remain the embodiment of constancy, as I am the model of virtue. I am going to turn monk; the maroon of the Franciscans becomes me wonderfully. *Dites donc, amiable garçon*, are we to feast with empty bottles?"

"Behold the model of virtue who calls without ceasing for more wine! When you shall be a monk, all Trouville will go to a nunnery *sans doute*. Fancy the mermaid sisters! and in convents mirrors are *défendu!*"

"And *baccarat* unknown," cried Charley, mischievously; "wilt thou still be a monk, O man of the burdened heart?"

"Ay, will I so, if for nothing but to shrive and chasten sinful youth. Irreverent souls! Delaunay shall paint me in the act, and I will go down to posterity in my holy robes, while *you* —"

"Heavens! what a wilderness of brown woollens it would be! you were better as the noble Roman, *mon ami.*"

"Smiling like the great Cæsar on Marie Velours! *Tiens!* do their monkships make love to actresses?"

"Alas! you undo me quite; is she not glorious, though?"

"*Magnifique!* It was thrilling to see you, — an encounter of Collossi! Did she, indeed, sing to you '*Dites-lui*'?"

"Ah! did she? I hear her yet!"

"*Vivat!* the mysterious one is found! In the amplitude of the goddess we are consoled for the vastness of the temple!"

"*Helas!*" said Somers, smiling wickedly in his wine, "what would you have? It is not good to be alone, and it is sometimes very desolate at the Malesherbes now. *Mais enfin!* time trots to-night. *Partons!*"

They came back to leave the Baronne, and Somers guarded his charge so closely that the parting was but a brief, stolen clasp, a clinging of the hand, and a whisper from Nina's lips, "A Dieu! mon ame, si tu meurs je te suiverais!"

Charley resented Somers's attempt to take him to their quarters, however, with half-angry impatience, and they spent two restless hours on the Boulevard, until fatigue drove him home despite himself. He dreaded the silence of his room and the unavoidable company of his thoughts, and over their parlor fire they sat late, and he drank more deeply of Somers's incomparable punch than that worthy willingly permitted. There was no moving him, and Somers, stealing a few hours' sleep upon a *canapé*, after a vain injunction to him to do the same, closed his eyes with a last waking recollection of the young man still sitting by the fire and gazing moodily at the coals. It had come to him at last, as it comes to all, the shock of arrest; the pause in the wild, mad whirl, when thought and memory step like twin giants in the path and bar the headlong course. Wine and light and the feverish cheer of the evening, even the still powerful spell of passion, were powerless to stay the flood of thoughts that seethed in his brain, as the hours of this night, his last, perhaps, on earth, rolled away. And down among the glowing coals he saw forms and faces rise and smile, and weep and fade away, — forms and faces of those days which seemed so far away, so hopelessly gone, but which rolled backward now in a tide to the man, who, with all his seven-and-twenty years of life, was still the gentle-hearted, motherless boy to whom the better memories of the past were the only treas-

ures he had not squandered. Solemn, sorrowful images, viewed with regretful, hopeless eyes.

"Had life meant only this for him? Was it, indeed, all gone, so soon? and it had been so empty and so weary! It mattered little. Who would remember him? The outcast, the self-destroyed! . . . . And *she!*" Then, as when a boy, long, long years before, he wept silent, streaming tears blinding him to the images in the fire, until the weary brain grew numb and cold to every sharper feeling, leaving him bowed and hopeless, but sleepless still.

Somers, aroused by instinct while it was still barely light, stared despondently at the unchanged figure before the dead fire. A suspicion even flashed through his mind at the first glimpse of the bent form, with the head locked in the hands; but he dismissed it on the instant, and got up briskly to his feet.

"Nearly seven! We 've no time to lose. It remains to be seen if Fritz has obeyed orders about the coffee. I ought to scold you for sitting there like another Tony all night. Slept any?"

"No, I think not."

Somers started at the tone, and looked at him again rather sharply. The coffee came in at the moment, and he burnt the cups over with Cognac. Charley took his listlessly, and failed to respond, by any change of manner, to Somers's efforts to arouse him, until the latter was fairly broken down by discouragement, not unmixed with a certain dread.

"I say, old fellow," he cried, putting his hand on Charley's shoulder, "you 're not going to the ground in this sort of mood, are you? You know me and my way, Charley; if you don't —"

He hesitated now, as the young man's eyes met his with a look in them he had never seen before, one that he was powerless to decipher. Then Charley got up steadily enough, though he sighed as he did so.

"Let us go now," he said.

The long ride was a silent one. Somers was nonplussed, but no longer troubled with the discomforting thought that had arisen over their coffee. Whatever his companion's manner might cover, it was something in which hesitation or weakness had no part; he saw that very quickly, and said no more. As their *coupé* turned from the Boulevards into the Place du Trone, another, which had evidently stood in waiting in the angle of Rue de Faubourg Saint Antoine, followed in rapid pursuit, but at a certain distance, and drew up discreetly in an unnoticed byway of the Bois, as the gentlemen in advance left their conveyance. Its occupants were the Baronne, worn and pale with sleepless suffering, and the faithful Henriette.

They found the other party on the ground, and also Vasour, who had arrived by a third cab. Martini, cold and smiling, bowed profoundly to the new-comers, and shrugging his shoulders impatiently, with a curse at the rawness of the air, suggested despatch. Charley lost none of his listlessness in the brief interim of pacing the ground, and received his weapon in silence from Somers.

"Cool is the word, old fellow," said the latter, a little nervous at the last.

The fall of Somers's handkerchief and the reports were simultaneous; and though Charley's was only too evidently a careless delivery, the Italian staggered wildly, and the pistol fell from his hand; the ball had sunk deep in his shoulder. Charley was unhurt.

All the fury of his nature surged into the Neapolitan's face under the sharp agony of his wound, and he called frantically for another weapon. The protestations of both seconds, as well as of Vasour, who declared the injury to be serious and to require instant attention, were vain. He was demoniacal in his violence, and, snatching a second pistol from the officer's grasp with his remaining hand, yelled to Charley to take his place. Somers covered him with a loaded weapon in a flash, and hurled a tremendous oath at him, with an injunction that fell on deaf ears.

"Give me your pistol," said Charley, quietly.

"But — it 's hellish! I won't have you murdered!" cried Somers, in whom the sleepy lion was fully aroused.

"He will faint before he can fire," said Vasour, in a loud whisper.

"*En garde!*" screamed the Italian again, livid with rage and pain.

Charley stepped to the mark and levelled his weapon, while Somers reluctantly drew his handkerchief. He had barely got it out when Martini fired in advance of the signal. Somers gave a great cry as Charley started slightly; but the young man recovered himself in an instant, and lowered his arm without firing, as his opponent reeled to the ground in a swoon.

"My God! are you hit?" cried Somers, coming up, and shaking like a leaf.

"A scratch, I think, — here," replied Charley, putting his hand to his head.

Nothing more, by the grace of Heaven; the merest graze of the temple, and a little groove among the thick, short curls; a shade deeper, and the letters in Somers's pocket must have gone to their destinations. There was a big lump in that worthy's throat and a mist in his blue eyes, as he wiped the few drops of blood from Charley's forehead.

"Thank God!" he said, hoarsely. Then he flamed up. "The ——! I will make Europe too hot to hold him for that trick!"

When they joined the others, Vasour was attending the insensible man, while the Colonel stood by with folded arms and scowling face.

"Do not remain, gentlemen," said Vasour. "I will get him off the ground, if you will send my servant, who is with my *coupé* yonder. I suppose it is my duty. No, I beg you to go, Monsieur Wales; we shall only have more violence if you stop."

The officer approached them as they turned to go.

"Monsieur Wales, your friend knows who I am. On my honor as a Frenchman and a soldier, I supposed this animal a gentleman, or I would not have acted for him. *Nom de Dieu!* if he were whole, I should shoot him myself to-morrow!"

"Colonel Sancy, we only regret the unpleasantness of the affair for your sake. I can speak for Monsieur Wales in that."

"I shall forget all but your goodness, monsieur," added Charley.

The grizzled veteran grumbled his acknowledgments, and turned back with a sour face, while the two betook themselves to their *coupé*. They found another standing beside it, from the opened window of which looked forth the tearful but speechless Nina. Charley started at the sight, and for a moment stood motionless, with an almost weary look in his face. Then he entered with her, while Somers took the smiling but equally tearful Henriette under his protection; and in that long ride cityward, with the Baronne crying and laughing by turns over the blood-stained handkerchief, with his aching head pillowed on her heart, and the trembling lips pressed upon that bullet-seam, as if to kiss away the crimson and the pain with a million kisses, he found brief oblivion again for all the accusing shadows of the night agone.

A matchless breakfast awaited them at the Hotel, far better in its kind and in its accessories than the *rognons* of the smoky Helder; and Nina, coming in after a swift visit to her toilet-chamber, as rosy now and as childishly happy as on the first morning Charley had seen her, cried out, with great glee, "*Voila! que j'étais prévoyante!* Did I not know there would be two famishing knights returned from the wars, and did I not send word to Pierre that his salvation depended on this very breakfast?"

"Ah, madame, in all things you are the Genius of the Perfect!" cried Somers in return, entering without ceremony into the merits of the *menu*, and becoming exalted in his great content with that particular, as well as with the general results of the morning. "To have known you, *belle* Baronne, to have lived within the radiance —"

"*Ah! là, là! grace aux discours! Et, par exemple,* what have you been saying to my Henriette?"

"That there were but two women in the world, *déesse*, and that she was one of them. Give me pardon! In the fulness of my heart I had wished to embrace her, but she embraces only Pierre. Happy Pierre! to be so embraced and possess the secrets of such a *salmi* as this. If he were Narcissus, he would perish in his own saucepan! *Mais* we must make some plans; it behooves *cet enfant* to vary the scene with joyous travel at this juncture."

"*Laissez-moi!*" said Nina, quickly, "must he go at once?"

"It would be best; in fact, safest."

"*Eh bien!* I have thought of that, too."

She had, in truth, speculated latterly on escaping the feverish circle as soon as the Lenten recess should arrive, and formed a little private scheme for a Southern tour. The event of the morning hastened it but slightly. Charley stole some rest during the day, and went in the evening to Fontainebleau, whither Somers accompanied him, and made the evening a pleasant one with punch and old-time reminiscences of the Aigle Noir, beneath whose hospitable roof they tarried. A message from Vasour said briefly that the Italian would have a hard month of it, but was quite safe to come around. All, indeed, looked well in the *dénouement*, but Somers was uncomfortably conscious of an alteration in Charley. He met the same indefinable look occasionally, that evening, which had puzzled him in the morning, and strove courageously but vainly to dispel the undeniable shadow which had fallen about Charley's demeanor. He went back to Paris, next day, with misgivings, and was led by them to urge despatch at the Baronne's. Three days after she joined Charley, and they left for Italy together; while Paris was ringing with the news of the *rencontre*.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE MOUNTAIN-SIDE.

A LOVELY day in a lovely land; the blue, soft sky of Italy; the blue, trembling expanse of the Mediterranean, and a rabble of mountains running downwards from regions of snow, until, clothed with gray olive-trees and groves of emerald citron, they plunge into the sea. In the background seared rocks and white-capped peaks and winter. In middle distance verdant valleys, breathing of the orange-flower and fragrant heath gay with blossoms, and chirping birds, and warm with summer heat; while full before

it the azure ocean shimmers in the sunlight, like a vast wave of velvet edged with gold. A world of nature framed in one dazzling scene, where all climes and seasons blend together; where the cold rocks look down on blooming vales, and the stately palm-tree on the shore waves a languid salute to the rugged pine above; where the worn man, broken in the struggle in some sunless land, sits down in the shadow of the fig-tree and draws fresh life from the salted air, while far away he may catch a cold glimpse of winter, and his thoughts fly homeward to the ungracious but ever-dear corner of the world from whence he comes; where old, odd forms of life linger in curious preservation, and unwritten history teems with strange traditions and the dim legends of three thousand years; where the sea-going Greek, the stern Prætorian, the half-naked Goth, and the dark-eyed Saracen successively have trod, and left in turn their impress on the dweller and the land.

Centuries of patient toil have ribbed the steep hills with terrace walls, until every mountain is like some giant's flight of steps, bordered and girt with wonderful old ranges of olive-trees whose ages may not be told. And far up, where only the eagle flies and broken masses of stone scorch in the sun, — in hidden crevices of the hills, where the few trees are shrunken things, and the vine grows short and thick and knotted in the cloud damps, — are little fairy villages reached only by hours of patient climbing. One sees there the antique type of the Latin in the strong-limbed men and hardy, gray-eyed women, whose forgotten ancestors fled the shores, and from their secret nooks aloft looked down with watchful gaze upon the turbaned rover in his fleet ship. How they have lived on those wild peaks through all the cheerless winters of eight hundred years, how increased and thriven and preserved the stern integrity of the Ligurian blood, constitutes a weird chapter of the past which no pen has added to written history. But like the eagles, who are their mates, no charm can tempt them from their airy heights and the bright picture on which they look down.

The air in this land is full of beauty and mystery and silence, the land itself a worn and many-lettered page whose ancient characters we puzzle over but cannot read. We stand in the old beaten path of changing races who crept around the sea-girt Alps, age after age, in the ever restless spirit of conquest, and marked it in their several fashions. With the roadside dweller on the shore, Gaul and Ligurian, Greek, Roman, and Moor, and the blond barbarian of the North, were in turn the victorious guests; and in the crabbed dialect of to-day, which defies all but a native tongue, we may still find traces of them all. Tradition fades with the Saracen; but hewn stone and crumbling monuments tell of the Augustan legions, and a dim but fixed antiquity points to the bold navigator of the Piræus long before them.

Here the wounded of the nations gather, and in the infinite charm which hangs about the historic hills find a rare auxiliary to the health-giving climate, which relieves the weary probation of the invalid in the long winter months. For Emma Howland the study possessed a pleasure that was simply intense; and for her also there was a balm in the air which promised well to restore the rose to her cheeks. Once established in their pretty villa by the sea, ("for all the world like a cottage of terra-cotta," wrote Miss Clare to an envious friend, "with *such* a sweet name! — they are all named, you know, — fancy, 'Villa Speranza'!") and the quiet routine of Mentone life fairly begun, the days and weeks sped swiftly in a sunny dream; and even to those of the party in full health, for whom the new life was in such marked contrast to their gay winters at home, the change was fraught with a delicious, restful enjoyment that left no room for regret. Clare was exultant, and entered into the business of excursions with a keen zest. There was no pause in her enthusiastic career until the summits of the Aiguille and Grandmondo had been duly scaled, the eerie hamlet of Santa Agnesa visited, and the general topography of the five inland valleys learned by heart. She had ridden every donkey in the place, and knew their several names and natures, and shouted "Esa!" in broad *patois* to those that behaved ill, and "Buono!" to those that behaved well, quite as vociferously as old Mariana, the "donkey-woman," and much more musically. She had long since ceased to regard a scramble of the docile beasts around some dizzy turn, where a misstep was death, as anything more than a mild exhilaration, and had once ventured a gallop down a steep incline to the abject terror of the beholders, native and foreign.

Having run through the list of possible excursions, she lapsed rather indolently under the growing warmth of the last winter month into the quieter employment that engrossed Emma's attention, and became her lazy companion in the ever-delightful foot rambles and expeditions of a botanical and artistic nature, the fruits of which accumulated in fern-albums and sketch-books.

The winter had quite broken, and the days were growing rapidly longer and brighter, if possible, when Huntley, without warning, made his smiling appearance at the villa. He was received with a burst of joyous welcome, such as only those

who have met on foreign soil can fully understand. Emma alone seemed to be under constraint. She was glad to see him, but only glad in a certain sense of association, and in a greater degree she was sorry. She was a changed woman since he had bade her God-speed on the steamer deck, six months before. After her severe illness at sea, she first began to understand the real truth as to her own health; and in that resigned and peaceful feeling which in women of her temperament accompanies the anticipation of an early death, mere earthly interests lost their value, and her mind turned to the contemplation of another life. It was a bitter disappointment not to see Charley at Paris, but that too had been accepted in the self-ignoring spirit of the invalid.

At the right time also, Mrs. Jennings, who had set herself to the task with a holy zeal, began to put in operation her own plans for the benefit of the young girl. She did not fail while at Paris to inform herself fully of Charley's actual position, and to reflect seriously thereupon. She looked through charitable eyes, moreover, as a woman of the world, and as one who knew the young man well and had loved him well. She was sorry, too, and owned it to herself. "But here is the poor girl growing old with this shadow in her heart; dying, for aught we may know, under its weight. I hope *he* does not know this and act as he does; no, I do not think it. If I could only have seen him! And after all, I could have done nothing, probably, for him. For her I must do, as I promised her poor mother. Ah me! if these men were only a little more like women! I wonder what *she* is like!"

Resolved at last, the good woman worked diligently. It was no difficult task for her to draw from Emma the whole truth, to elicit it by delicate, unsuspected stratagems, and bit by bit: that there had never existed any expressed understanding between her and her cousin; that there had never been any declaration beyond the tacit acknowledgment of a lifelong tie which was deeper than declarations. Mrs. Jennings justly estimated the strength of such love, but built, like a true formalist, on the omitted rite. How, gradually, with all the craft of tenderness, she drew stone after stone away from the poor foundation of Emma's dream, until the trembling structure was a ruin, need not be told. He was in no way bound; he had, beyond her sisterly affection, no attraction at home; he might form among other scenes new and strong ties, and lose all desire to return; he might even marry and settle abroad, since he was independent of his father, and their relations were so unfortunate. It was cruel work; "Mamma Jennings" found it so often enough, but she believed in herself, and was firm of purpose, and so at last Emma was forced to decide that it would be sheer folly to dream any longer. Her days of wild, rebellious thoughts were over; she only viewed the broken hope a last time quietly and tearfully, with an unspoken prayer for the happiness of him with whom it had linked her.

After this it may be imagined that she dreaded to meet Richard Huntley. She put him aside with the things of the past, and his reappearance disturbed the tranquillity of her new life.

His instincts warned him of a change, though its precise nature he could not fathom; but he was cheered by the gleam of sympathy shown him by Mrs. Jennings, and, with a half-desperate resolve, threw himself unreservedly upon her mercy.

"I do not ask you to influence her, or to abet my cause," he said, with great earnestness, after a carefully worded but very feeling confession of his hopes; "all I dare ask, all I can ask, is that you will judge my case as kindly as you can, and, if it seems right to you, leave me free to win her in my own way, with the patient endeavor that becomes a love like mine."

"You know the point beyond which I cannot go, Mr. Huntley," she said, kindly. "I know Emma likes you; whether she could ever love or marry you I may not even venture to guess; influence her, of course, I could not. She has loved her cousin very deeply and tenderly, and that affection will ever remain with her a sentiment that must be studied and respected. Knowing her character as you do, I need scarcely tell you that. For my own part, all I may say I do say frankly, I should be very happy in your success."

"There are no words to thank you for that; there might well be a worthier suitor, but there could be none with a profounder reverence, a truer love, I may say, for Miss Howland, than I feel. If I win her, I shall esteem it the crowning glory of my life, and as God helps me shall strive to grow more deserving of her every day I live."

And so guardedly did he approach her again, with such matchless *finesse* did he strive to recover his old ground and gain new, that the first reluctant feeling in Emma's heart wore quickly away, giving place to the wonted influence of his presence. She was growing stronger too, and exhilarated by that rare, sweet consciousness of returning health which gladdens all surroundings and makes the life that was so weary yesterday strangely bright and full of promise.

Emma Howland, smiling in conscious gladness, smiled also on Richard Huntley;

he caught at that happy token and no longer feared failure.

He was a famous accession to their circle, this wonderful man of the world. He infused new life into their slightly tedious routine, and brought his rare cleverness and versatility to bear effectively on all its details, from the more serious questions of a sanitary nature down to the simple process of drying a fern-leaf. He demolished the proud structure of Miss Clare's conceit at one fell blow, by discovering no less than three new specimens of ferns among the hills, long after she had sighed like Alexander over the exhausted field; and he was the especial admiration of that young lady, when, in knickerbockers and Tyrol blouse, he scrambled up the roughest precipices and ravaged impracticable crevices for the early primroses and anemones. Then he introduced a new and delightful feature into their amusements by hunting up the least cumbersome of the fishing-craft, overhauling it neatly, and rigging it with a pretty lateen sail; in this they made the merriest little voyages to the Bordighera Point and Monaco, and even Villefranche harbor, and got as brown as the "lemon-girls" on the sunny sea. And in the evenings, after the "sunset chill" was gone, it was simply blissful to sit in the little balcony over the beach, with the fisher-folk, men and women, pulling forever at the far-away nets, and chanting forever that self-same song:—

"Mariannina comme chiagne
Ca s' è rotta la lancella!
Come fa la puverella
Quanno l' acqua a da tirà!
Qnanno l' acqua a da tirà!
Quanno l' acqua a da tirà!
Mariani sciasciona mia!
Lassa a chillo e pigila a me!"

with the moonlight turning all the sea to silver, and Mr. Huntley, gathering inspiration from the scene, feeding his hungry listeners with a thousand curious reminiscences of that sea itself, and the far lands beyond.

In advance, indeed, of their eagerly anticipated Italian tour, he wellnigh familiarized them with the marvels of that storied land, as well as of those which they could not hope to visit. There was none he had not visited, studied, it would seem; and he knew well how to invest his recollections of them with that charm of description which has led many an innocent traveller to grievous disappointment, and to which the *vieux routier* listens with a smile and is not deceived.

The appreciative Clare quite lost her heart to the charmer, and rhapsodized fervidly over his surpassing fascinations.

"Is n't he splendid?" she said to Emma a score of times, adding once, with a little teasing laugh, "I am half in love with him myself. I should be quite if — if he were not 'spoke for'!"

Whereupon Emma blushed painfully, but laughed also, or tried to do so, as she bent low over her sketch-book.

"You darling goose! Do you know," continued the impulsive girl, on whose unflagging elasticity the soft, semi-tropical climate had proved almost powerless, "you are becoming *awfully* handsome? You are, indeed; you never looked so well in your life, and it 's my only consolation that the sun has made you almost as black as I am!"

Huntley would have used a better word than "handsome," when, one afternoon some days later, they stood together on the high shoulder of the Corniche Road, beyond the Pont Saint Louis, waiting for the others, who were climbing up from the Red Rocks below with much unnecessary clamor. Emma had mounted upon a block of stone and was looking down at the stragglers, laughing merrily at their laborious advance, and especially at Clare and her sister, who were "racing" for the top, and whose progress was marked by a desperate disregard of life and limb, as ludicrous as it was exciting. Emma had taken off her hat as she stood there, and the smart sea-breeze, wafting aside her splendid hair (which Clare that morning had decided was "too beautiful" to be "done up," and which fell in golden luxuriance to her waist), showed the cheek, once more full and rounded, mantling with rich color, and dimpled with merriment; and Huntley's soul was in his eyes as he gazed covertly upon the lovely face.

A travelling *vettura* was toiling up the ascent, its four stout horses puffing in the hot sun, and the driver in front emulating the noisy dog upon the mountain of luggage behind by maintaining a steady volley of musical "Ye-oups!" and an ear-piercing snapping of his whip. Of its two occupants one, a lady, was indolently conning a book; the other, a gentleman, as indolently blinking at the dimpled sea far down below. He had just caught sight of the gay party of climbers, and seemed about to call the attention of his companion to them, when the two figures on the hill-top met his eye, and he paused in the movement, while the smile died suddenly from his face. Even at that distance a thrill of recognition shocked him, and he shrank back in his corner with compressed lips; but he never withdrew his gaze from the two who stood by the roadside, and whom the travellers were slowly approaching. Once, indeed, he looked about quickly, as if thinking of escape, and his eye lingered a moment upon the unused sunshade on the seat before him; but he only clenched his hands after it, and settled

himself with an air of desperation in his place, while a stricken, suffering look overspread his features.

It was all in an instant; the carriage passed just behind the strollers, but southward-bound travellers were too common on that one great road to Rome to excite much curiosity, and Huntley, who had glanced at it when it was still distant, had become suddenly interested in a just visible sail, and was scanning it through his glass. Emma alone turned as the carriage passed, and met the great brown eyes she knew so well; there were no others like them in the world. She started with a stifled cry, and her hand went to her heart; but the next minute the vehicle had gained the ridge and went thundering down the Ventimiglia side at a gallop. She could have screamed then, and in the first bewildering impulse sped after it as after the last departing hope of her life; but that swift, strained glance which had recognized her cousin, pale, startled, strangely altered, she thought, and staring at her with hollow eyes, had taken in as well the handsome, unconscious woman, reclining indolently by his side. She was paralyzed for the instant; breath, sense, everything but sight, seemed gone; but when the reaction came, the memory of that woman's face gave her strength to repress the cry that had sprung to her lips. While Huntley remained intent on the sail, she struggled to calm the tumult of her heart; luckily he did not observe or address her for some time, and a little later he went down the hillside a few steps to give his hand to the panting Clare. Then Emma ran breathlessly into the road, and, after a moment's search, gathered a little book from the dust, and hid it in her dress. She had seen it fall, and marked the place, and was fortunate enough to gain it unseen.

On the way home she was absent and constrained, and Huntley noticed it uneasily, the more uneasily because she was also pale.

"I fear you have walked too far, Miss Emma; will you let me go for a *panier?*"

"O no; it is nothing, just the least headache. Please excuse me if I am stupid."

He understood, and kept silence to the villa, but he was discomforted. Once there and in her room, she examined the book with eager, trembling hands and hungry eyes. It was a pretty *bijou* copy of *Jocelyn*, and on the fly-leaf was an inscription wreathed in a delicate border of ivy-leaves, the whole in pencil and by what artist-hand she knew only too well: —

NINA CHOISY, *Vallat, Switzerland, August*, 186–.

The date was seven months old! She studied it long and silently, while the tears gathered slowly in her eyes; then she kissed it where his hand had set its mark, — what was the name to her, since the characters were his? — and hid it away. Then she sat in her window-corner and wept quietly.

Clare came in, and, after a quick glance of surprise, tumbled on her knees beside the silent girl.

"What is it, darling?" she asked, peering up into Emma's face with the black eyes which were always so sensitive to the influence of tears, and never more so than now.

"Nothing, dear; or only a little thing which I will tell you by and by. Don't tell the mamma, will you? It is the last, the very last time!"

Clare's eyes overflowed at the melancholy cadence of the last words.

"Tell me, dear, was it Mr. Huntley —"

"No, no! I will tell you, but not now. Don't ask me, please. There, I am going to be good again; promise that you won't speak of it, Clare, there 's a good girl, and go and dress for dinner."

Two days later Emma found herself alone with Mr. Huntley, under the pines of the Cap Martin; the others were careering wildly far ahead in pursuit of an unhappy butterfly, with much uproar and a mad flourish of gauze nets.

"Mr. Huntley," she said, suddenly, "I wish to ask you a question."

He had marked her closely for these two days, and noted a new and alarming preoccupation in her manner. It alarmed him because he could not understand it or discern its cause, and nothing so tried him as the intangible. His heart sank at these words, for no visible reason, — how he smiled afterwards when he recalled it! — but he said quickly, "It is always a pleasure, Miss Emma."

"But this is a strange question, perhaps; do you know who 'Nina Choisy' is?"

"Nina Choisy! — do I? — yes — that is —" He was absolutely at fault.

"I see you do. Don't fear to tell me, Mr. Huntley. I know all."

"You — you know all?"

"Yes, only tell me, Mr. Huntley, is he — are they married?"

She asked the question with an effort, though in all innocence. Evidently, thought Huntley, who was struggling hard for bearings, she did *not* "know all." His hesitation was marked, but she did not notice it, though she hung on the answer. He said, at last, with a flash in his eyes she did not see, "No, but I believe they are going to be. Pardon me, Miss Emma; I thought, we all thought, that it would be painful, perhaps — Mrs. Jennings —"

"You are all too good to me. I — I am very glad of it, Mr. Huntley. I hope he will be very happy; do you not also? There

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— I meant to be brave about it — I am not very, am I?" She was trying to smile gayly, but two telltale tears had broken bounds on her cheeks.

"Miss Emma," said her companion, soberly, and his voice seemed to tremble a little, "you are the noblest woman I have ever known; I cannot tell you how I honor you."

"Thank you, but I don't deserve that praise. Shall we turn back now? I see they have gone around. I will explain how I discovered this."

She did so, while he listened, gravely, and winced a little when he learned she had seen her cousin. He was very guarded in any further mention of Charley, and hurried at once to communicate with Mrs. Jennings.

"She asked me if they were married. It was terribly awkward, and I was absolutely at a loss. I said, after some hesitation, which must have seemed strange, that they were going to be." Mrs. Jennings did not like the deception, simply because it was a deception. As for Charley, she had quite thrown him over, and thought Emma now could bear the whole truth. But Huntley clung to the fraud. "It is scarcely a deception," he said quickly, a little impatiently she thought; "I have the best authority for assuring you that it is a conclusion which may occur any day, and which is practically inevitable, soon or late."

"You seem to be informed," said the lady, with some curiosity.

"His intimate friend at Paris is an old acquaintance of my own, to whom I gave him letters. Through Somers I hear of him, and through him also I have made more than one effort to reach Charley, as you may believe. He has resented them one and all."

"It 's a pity his 'intimate' and your 'acquaintance' could not have exercised a little restraint over him," said Mrs. Jennings, with a slight elevation of the brows. "I have had to hide my 'Galignani' for a week past. You saw it, of course."

"I read of a duel, — *cela va dans l'addition*, — and it accounts for his flight through here. No one regrets his course more deeply than I do, and no one, perhaps, so well knows the utter futility of attempting to arrest it. It must reach its goal, as it will, in marriage. Her husband lives only from day to day, cannot possibly live long, and the future is clear to my mind. It would not be well, surely, to embitter Miss Emma's affectionate memories of her cousin at such a time, when to-morrow may amend his fault in the world's eyes, and put him precisely in the position where she now imagines him. I cannot but think it would be unwise, if not cruel, to do it."

Mrs. Jennings did not argue further; she was quite sure now as to the issue of Huntley's suit, and accepted it as inevitable in any case. The deception — for, despite his words, a deception she felt it to be — was repugnant to her; but in view of the end which now seemed assured, she stifled the small whisper of conscience, and held her peace.

Baronne Nina, startled by the sudden increase of speed, as the *vetturino* lashed his horses into a run down the hill, had given a little nervous spring which sent the book in her hand unnoticed over the side, and caught Charley's arm. "*Mon Dieu!* how the animal drives!" The next moment her eyes fell on the face of her companion, and noted the change there in alarm.

"*Qu'as-tu, chérie?*" she asked, quickly, catching his hand as she spoke. What he "had" at that instant was a dull "wonder" if a leap over the dizzy precipice along which they were now whirling was not preferable to such a life as his had become. For the first time he drew his hand quickly away from her with a half-recoil that sent a chill to her heart. "*Mais, qu'as-tu?* you are ill, dear; we will go back to Mentone."

"No! no!" he said, excitedly; but calming himself quickly, he forced a laugh. "I had a bad dream, pet; was it a dream? I wonder — "

"What? what are you talking of?"

"What? I don't know, I 'm sure. I was asleep, I think. Where do we stay to-night, did you say?"

"Me! I did not say, I don't even know. Oneilly or something like; you are a little stupid, *bébé;* you arranged it all yourself."

"So I did, I remember now. How lovely it is!"

And because it was so lovely, he leaned back wearily and closed his eyes. She watched him with a troubled face, and marked his contracted brow and twitching lips in genuine concern. Once she caught a muttered name. He opened his eyes presently, and found her watching him.

"Who is 'Huntley'?" she asked, curtly. He stared at her an instant, and then smiled an unpleasant smile. "My cousin, pet, or going to be!"

Strange that his words should be the same as those of the cunning tongue of Huntley himself two days later, "going to be"!

Nina did not recover from her alarm that day or the next, or for many. A spirit of recklessness, of desperation even, seemed to have taken possession of Charley, which she was powerless to control. He began by exhausting the little stock of Moët at the primitive *albergo* of Oneglia, and held high

revel the night through with the amazed but delighted *coterie* of gentlemen of the road who tarried there, while the Baronne spent a sleepless and agitated night in solitude.

A swift transit by Genoa and Civita Vecchia brought them to Rome, where the world was gathering for the Passion Play, and here a climax was reached. Somers got a telegram from Nina, and came over Cenis in hot haste, filled with fears and mad with sluggish Italian trains. He arrived to find Nina in an agony of distress, and the whole papal police engaged in a futile search for Charley, who had been missing for three days. He was at last found drinking confusion to princes and potentates in the company of several suspected Garibaldians, at an obscure *ristoratore* without the walls, and Somers had a very nervous night with him in struggling against the effects of a too prolonged indulgence in the abominations of Vermouth and Falerno Rosso. The Bohemian was rather nonplussed by the state of affairs, but advised a return to Paris. "We can keep him in hand there, at any rate," he said to Nina, in whose grief and bewilderment there was beginning to be just a trifle of impatience. "Did he get any letters or see anybody on the road?"

"I know of none, of nothing. It is inexplicable."

Charley evinced no surprise at seeing Somers when he regained sanity. "It 's you, is it, Ned? I thought so. You see I don't improve. It 's hard on her, though; she ought to drop me, ought n't she? I 'm going to do better, though; you 'll stay with us, won't you?"

Somers noted the pleading eyes with a thrill; he had seen men before who feared to be left with themselves. "Of course, if you like, old fellow; but I detest this country. I wish I could persuade you to go back to Paris."

"Back to Paris! Why, I shall be delighted if Nina — "

"She wishes it above all things. Everything is right there. Martini got away to Austria, despite his wound, and all the world stands ready to pat your back for ridding them of him. As for this graveyard country, I can't abide it. I came down here ever so many years ago and had it out with the classical shades, had the fever too, and fought the whole line, single-handed, in my delirium, royal and imperial, from Romulus to Vespasian. My man-nurse personated the enemy, and I ended by pitching him out the window, and sending all the moveable effects after him. I was more an antique Goth than a simple Cockney, and I thought I was pulling down the Capitol. He was nearly killed, poor devil, and I almost died myself; since when, I bide with Cataline. Paris it is! 'Gad! how I have missed you there!"

The large circle of good people who were mourning the unlooked-for *relâche* at the Hotel Choisy, where in the Lent-time indulgence had ever been the order of the hour, were thrown into a flutter of delight by the reappearance of the Baronne from her brief retirement, and too grateful for the boon to gossip about its cause. Life resumed its course there as gay and brilliant as before, and if possible with added *abandon*, which some shrewd observers charged to *l'Americain*, while they drew their various conclusions. And, in truth, Charley knew no longer any limit; and Somers, watchful and anxious, began to despair of the young man who failed to harden under his discipline of fire, and disproved all his fine theories respecting hard riding and settling to the ground. It was a clear case of "bruise," from the cry to the death. He wondered much about the Italian *fiasco*, but ventured no questions. One night Charley said abruptly, "You hear sometimes from Huntley, I suppose?"

"Yes; I should speak of it if you had not snubbed me once, as he always sends messages."

"Very good of him; he 's in Europe, I see."

Somers opened his eyes, and said, "The deuce!" to himself; to Charley he said, "Yes; came out on some bond negotiation, and was at Frankfort, I believe, the last I heard; or no! By Jo—" He checked the exclamation, and added, "He is down at Mentone with some friends."

Curiously enough, he had not thought of that before; a light fell on him at once when he did so.

"I know that, too," said Charley, who was walking the room and smoking nervously. "He moves in a mysterious way, does our friend Dick; I should n't wonder if he was going to be married."

"WHAT?"

"Going to be married, I fancy," repeated Charley carelessly, kicking a stool out of his way as he spoke. "Why not? He is *un homme comme il faut*, he is; has no 'disreputable connections,' so far as is known, and will be rich some day."

Somers did not speak. He was strangely agitated; and to mask his disturbance he got his pipe, filled it with fresh tobacco on half a bowlful of old ashes, and consumed a whole box of *allumettes* in the vain effort to light it.

"Fascinating man, too, if he tries to be," continued Charley, in a cynical tone, and more to himself than to Somers. "The girls at home raved about him. I never quite believed him an angel in disguise, and I

did n't think — Bah! what a fool I am! I say, Ned, who is this Dorion?"

"Deuced fine fellow," said Somers, evidently relieved by the diversion; "old family friend of the Baronne, but has been in Algiers with his regiment since you came out. He was a sort of *protégé* of the old Colonel, I believe, and has always been an intimate at the Baronne's. You will like him when you know him better."

"I dare say," said Charley, yawning. "I guess I 'll go to cover; *bona sera!*"

"Dream sweetly!" echoed Somers, with a wave of his hand; but the serenity faded from his face as the door closed, and for once the social soul was plainly glad to be alone. He readjusted the pipe and made a feeble effort to smoke, but it was a vain one; and when he withdrew, after a lengthy and troubled meditation, to his sleeping-room, the expression on his features was almost despairing. His thoughts, whatever they might be, were much too bitter to find the usual vent in soliloquy, though he did break out mournfully as he turned in to his bed, "What can *I* do? I wish he would go home!"

CHAPTER XVII.

FREEDOM — SHACKLES.

THE new-comer at the Hotel Choisy, who had so far attracted the attention of our hero as to provoke the inquiry recorded in the last chapter, was, as Somers had said, an old family intimate of the D'Alencourts. The elder Dorion had been a brother in arms with the Colonel, and, dying in Africa, had sent his orphaned boy to France some years after the Colonel's return, with a last message begging the good offices of the friend in his child's behalf. Though the boy had a home among his father's kindred at Lyons, he spent much of his early life at the chateau of the D'Alencourts, and there had been a firm and rather tender alliance between the little Nina and the dark-eyed Gustave. Through the Colonel's patronage the boy was sent to St. Maur at Paris when he was still in the season of sand-pies and *pain de sucre*, and Nina a demure and diminutive little body of six years' growth. They met but seldom afterwards, though often enough to preserve the simple *entente cordiale* of their childhood. He was away on service during the brief interval between Nina's withdrawal from the *seminaire* at Paris and her marriage, and did not appear to renew the ancient acquaintance until she was the established lady *du monde* of the Boulevard Monceaux.

It might be said that no marked emotion was awakened in the bosom of the gallant *spahi* by the news of her marriage, which reached him in due course through the mess-gossip, by Afric's sunny fountains. He smiled slightly when he recalled the well-remembered spectre of Chateau Choisy; but was apparently disposed to regard the match with a certain degree of approval, as his thoughts foreshadowed something very like the state of things which afterwards existed at the gay Hotel at Paris. He pledged the happy pair in a beaker of foaming Seltzer warmed with the cognac of Cette, and was glad to think that he might some day meet the blooming Nina at a certain advantage in the world. Nor was he disappointed in this regard, as whenever afterwards he enjoyed an opportunity of basking in the hospitable glow of the Baronne's town-house, his heart had been cheered by manifestations of great friendliness on the part of the mistress, and his pride more than gratified by a marked recognition of his personal merits. Truth to tell, Monsieur Gustave was a commendable specimen of his kind. In appearance he was the *beau ideal* of the French soldier, and had already won honorable mention in desert strife; and in his circle he ruled first favorite by virtue of rare good-nature and that *insouciant* dash which is the distinguishing charm of the military scapegrace. Nina liked him immensely. He amused her, and sharing a perfect understanding, which rendered mistakes impossible, they had even beguiled themselves with some thoroughly amiable and thoroughly unmeaning flirtation. It was edifying beyond words when the handsome soldier affected a pale and sickly melancholy, and dwelt with sweet sadness on the cruel issue of their lives, so lovingly twined at the beginning, so ruthlessly torn apart, etc., etc. Nina could listen with sympathetic solemnity, but would hint at the end that the whisper of the world led her to believe he had found much consolation in the usual sources; whereupon there would be smiles and "*que voulez-vous's?*" and *cigarrettes Laferme*.

He had resented the conquest of the "barbarian of the West," however, had the noble soldier, and swore a round oath in the seclusion of his quarters, when the amazing news reached him in due course of correspondence. It was a reflection on the national prestige, on his own personal repute as a winsome knight, and a shattering blow to his *amour propre;* and though the fires of his wrath burned sulphurously for a time without disastrous consequences, he finally asked a leave and crossed the *Magnum* in a belligerent state of mind. When he appeared on the scene, soon after the return of the party from Italy, it was with a chivalrous resolution to oppose the present state of affairs at any cost. He proved

more a *Deus ex machina* than in his simple soul he had dreamt of being.

He had come at a critical moment, — at the moment when Nina, under the haunting influence of certain memories, and tortured by a dread she could not name even to herself, was casting about for means to solve the doubts that grew and oppressed her with every hour that passed. Of all possible weapons, the desperate woman, in her day of suspense, invariably selects the worst and the most dangerous. To Nina, with her Southern blood and the passion that could so easily be excited to delirium, this weapon seemed the simple instrument of her need. She had thought of it, a little fearfully, perhaps, at first, but more and more as the fact became clear and terrible, that her life-prize was slipping from her grasp slowly, but steadily and surely, even as she watched it with her hungry eyes.

How win it back? Alas! this is common cry of half the women who have ever lived.

Gustave Dorion came at that moment, and with a feverish eagerness she cast her lines and set her last hope on the chance.

As for Charley, it scarcely needs to be told to what level his feelings had sunk. The love — if by that name we may dignify the brief, shameful passion that had occupied his senses and aged his heart — was dead within him. Its very last spark had gone out in that terrible instant of recognition on the mountain road, — drowned in a flood of unshed tears that flowed inward upon his heart, buried in a mountain mass of shame and regret. All that remained was the man's remorseful consciousness of duty; of his duty to her who had given her all for him, and to whom he should ever owe the full allegiance of his actions until she should set him free. So far, even in those wild, reckless days, he was true and strong. He set a stern watch upon himself, and labored hard to conceal from her the change of his feelings. Alas, how vainly! No mask may blind a woman's eyes to such a sight; she, to whom he belonged, still might have understood perhaps, the noble chivalry which governed him now, and even valued it as rare among men; but that the old *love* was dead, or dying, all the same, she knew, or must infallibly have known, only too soon.

In the reckless haste with which she began her desperate task, in the sad mockery of coquetry which she assumed at the very moment of the Lieutenant's presentation, he would have seen — ah, how quickly! — if he had still loved, something more than a pleasant friendliness, which in truth was all he *did* see. Intent as he ever was now upon maintaining the guard upon himself, he noted nothing of the delicate prelude; or, if he did, it was only to feel a certain pleasure in the addition to the *habitués* at the Hotel Choisy of a person so evidently agreeable to Nina.

He first met Dorion at the Baronne's familiar *déjeuner*, and found a tall, handsome man, of apparently his own age, with a bronzed face, long straggling mustache, and peculiarly bright and winning eyes. It was a very prepossessing *personnel*, and he acknowledged the very profound salute of the young soldier with a certain instinctive liking. He assisted afterwards at the breakfast, participating slightly in the conversation, which ultimately was narrowed, however, to a merry exchange of reminiscences between the Baronne and Dorion, in which he took no part. He noticed, perhaps, Nina's rather excited manner, and the excellent understanding which evidently existed between the two, but without even a momentary feeling of curiosity.

The progress of Nina's diversion need not be dwelt upon. Charley's unconscious indifference was only a confirmation strong from which she shrank shuddering, while her part became so pronounced and reckless that all Paris gossiped over it and marvelled at his blindness or indifference. At last, when his own discovery of the situation could scarcely have been longer delayed, the inevitable whisper of the winds brought him enlightenment.

It would not be easy to describe the mingled feelings which were stirred in him by the news. In the first moment there was an unquestionable sense of relief; but, be the circumstances what they may, there is ever a feeling of humiliation in such a case for the man, which, if it is not so deep or so trying as the woman's, is still sufficiently strong to dominate all other sentiments, and to lead oftentimes to bitter, even dangerous results. Charley was very angry, very savage indeed, and infinitely disgusted. He had no charity for the simple and deliberate sensualism which characterized, animated indeed, that heated Paris life, and detested the myriad shades of *grossièreté* in which its votaries revelled. He had lived within it, to be sure, but never imbibed it, and until now he had believed the Baronne as hostile to it as himself. He had sinned, not as men sin daily in thought and deed, but as a man who falls unwarned into error, as into a pit, carrying with him and retaining the hardly spotted garment of his nature. He put the worst construction on Nina's conduct with rather hasty judgment, and the worst color as well to his own position; and his state of mind may be better imagined than described.

With a dim purpose of ending at a blow the unendurable connection, he made his appearance at the Hotel after some days of

absence, — days of which it would have puzzled him sorely to give account, — entering the *salon* at a late hour on a stormy March night. A few callers only had braved the tempest of the streets for the goal of warmth and luxury in those gilded parlors. Madame Grandoie was seated at whist with a select trio of her own favorites, — elderly gentlemen of a studiously military poise, due mainly to latent whalebone, — and most of the others had made the game the centre of their revolutions. Charley missed the Baronne, but as he passed into the inner *salon* he heard her short laugh from the conservatory beyond; it ran at right angles with the room, and at the same instant, in the large mirror which filled an opposite space, he caught the full reflection of an interesting tableau which caused him to pause suddenly in his advance.

It is to be presumed that the gallant Lieutenant, in view of the fact that his short leave expired this very night, felt himself justly entitled to some slight token of gratitude for the part he lately sustained with, it must be owned, admirable art. Emboldened by the consciousness of desert, he had seized the opportunity in the conservatory to speak plaintively of his forced flight on the morrow; and Nina looked soberly at him as he spoke, thinking not of him, but of certain matters as yet unaccomplished and to the furtherance of which his assistance seemed essential. There was danger in the glance, however; Monsieur Dorion quite mistook its nature, which was the more natural since he was French and a large drinker of wine at dinner; he caught both her hands in his with a quick, strong grasp, and, before she could make a movement to resist him, drew her close and kissed her cheeks one after the other.

This was the picture Charley saw; and seeing it he swung around on his heel with something like a smothered oath.

An instant later the Baronne brushed past him with a flaming face, and apparently without perceiving him; Dorion followed in her steps, and paused rather confusedly before our hero. Charley regarded him with a strange mixture of feelings, in which anger, however, bore no part.

"*Bon soir!* Monsieur Wales," said the officer with an embarrassed bow, curiously unlike his usual easy manner.

"*Bon soir!* Monsieur Dorion," returned Charley, with a smile that added to the warrior's discomfiture; "you were going, *n'est ce pas?*"

"*Mais oui;* I had — that is, it is my last night in the city, and I must look in at the club."

"Will you share my *coupé?* I was just about to take my leave, and shall be honored."

"*Merci;* but you are just arrived!" returned Dorion, glancing timidly towards Nina, to whom the conversation was quite audible. She was leaning over the players, and the fire of her face was giving place slowly to a deathly pallor.

"True," said Charley, with a clear, cold laugh; "it is like Féydeau's two cooks, — *celui qui arrive — celui qui pars.* No offence, my dear Dorion; we will say I had an engagement."

Nina did not turn as they passed out, nor did they address her; but as the door closed on the two, and while every occupant of the room stood open-mouthed in wonder at the scene, she gave a low shuddering sob, and sank senseless on the floor.

In that instant when Dorion's hot lips were on her face, she had caught sight of the tall figure in the mirror, and even at that distance felt the glitter of the brown eyes. No mortal voice could have given adequate expression to the cry which sprang to, but stopped unspoken, at her lips, "Je suis perdue!"

There was wild confusion in the room. Madame Grandoie followed the example of her charge with commendable promptness, and the demoralization of the three *vieux militaires* was pitiful. The others, under Henriette's guidance, bore the unconscious Barronne to her chamber, where she was left to the care of the faithful maid, while the guests hurried away with eager feet to spread the marvellous tale. It was not too late for these industrious worthies, and in twenty Parisian *salons* it was known that night that the Baronne Choisy had had a "violent altercation" with "the American," and been left insensible on the floor of her parlor by that barbarian. It was further learned, indeed, that same night, that he had knocked her down; and for days that followed no epithet was too severe for the man concerning whom Paris had quite exhausted its indolent curiosity, and from whom it was swift to withdraw its fickle favor.

"*Vale,* 'Vales' — *veillez veilleurs!*" cried an alliterative wit at the club; and twoscore gentlemen, who might have been classed as the "watchers," drew a quick breath at the news, pricked up their fourscore ears like hounds on the scent, and cried, "*Enfin!*"

Charley and his companion, arriving at their destination, found the brilliant club-rooms thronged with a numerous company escaped from the stormy streets, and the play at high tide. They sat down mechanically at *écarté*, neither being in a very collected state of mind, and glad of the diversion; and a circle soon formed about them, attracted by the equal skill of the players, as well as by a piquant interest which their known relations, *auprès* the

Baronne, lent to the game. Nothing that is novel is ever lost in Lutèce; and as it became known through the *salons* that the *compétiteurs* of the Hotel Choisy were pitted in play, the encircling group rapidly assumed the appearance of a *galerie*, at least in point of numbers and enthusiasm. The side-betting was excited and extravagant, and the players seemed to catch the reckless spirit as, while the fortunes of the table varied impartially, the stakes reached a figure that was far beyond the "rules." Charley was drinking freely; in which indulgence his opponent, qualified by an African experience, vied with a good grace, but to an indiscreet excess. The soldier's skill, or good luck, deserted him finally, and the luck remained with Charley, until Dorion quite lost his head, and, at the conclusion of a game which cost him ten thousand francs, swore a big soldier oath, and cried a double.

"If you will," laughed Charley; "we will prove the maxim of love and cards to be true or false to-night; eh, Dorion?"

"Comment?"

"Nothing, double it is; your cards, I believe."

The outsiders had repudiated the even stake *à la* Vichy, and five to one was given on Charley. Dorion lost again and again, and was sufficiently sobered to decline further play, as he well might be. His losses would cripple him for a year to come. Charley drew him aside, and tore the IOU's into bits before his eyes.

"Pardon me, Dorion, I cannot take your money," he said to the amazed and offended officer; "I am indebted to you for enabling me to forget myself for two hours. You go to Algiers in the morning?"

"Yes; but, Monsieur Wales —"

"We shall not meet again, probably," continued Charley, ignoring the other's assumption of dignity; "my best wishes, Lieutenant; *bon soir et bon voyage!*" Before the bewildered officer could collect his ideas, the young man was gone.

"*Diable des Americains!*" he muttered, as he turned again to the tables; "it's a case for Charenton; *mais il a du cœur, l'enfant!*"

It was past midnight when Charley came out into the street and the storm; but the mood of the elements soothed his heated brain, and, ignoring the few shivering cabbies who kept watch at the corner, he walked away towards the Malesherbes, led more by instinct than reason. He had forgotten his *paletot*, and met the beating gale in thin evening dress; but of this he had no consciousness. A single thought surging back upon him after the momentary distraction of play occupied his mind swept from it all others.

He was free!

The heavy bond of yesterday was broken, and by no act of his; to him emancipated, what were stormy skies or whistling winds? He had never fully realized the weary weight of that bond till now when it was broken; and the feeling of relief was almost intoxicating. He reached his quarters, and hurried to his room; a feverish, sudden impulse had seized him by that time, — the impulse to fly, to put land and sea between him and this hated Paris, with its glitter and deceit; and he acted upon it with an eagerness that was almost cowardly. He tossed a few things into a portmanteau, and changed his soaked dress for a travelling-suit. He felt chilled and uncomfortable all the time, and drank frequently, and found it a difficult thing to do when he sat down to pen a brief note to Somers (who was not "at home" this night), asking him to look after his things for the present.

It was not yet daylight when he rang up the sleepy porter and despatched him for a cab. The execution of this order was not conspicuously prompt, but a vehicle was brought at last, and a shining *louis* lent such sudden speed to Jean's lazy limbs, that the portmanteau was tossed up to its perch as soon as Charley himself had entered the cab and banged the door after him. With the imperturbable dignity of his class, *cocher* sat silent aloft while these preliminaries were accomplished, blinking with drowsy eyes at his horses. It was only when Charley was beginning to wonder that they did not move off that the genius of the box leaned down to the window, and said quietly, "Eh b'en! monsieur; où allons nous?"

Where, indeed! Charley had not thought of that. "Was there a train out of the city in *any* direction at that hour?"

"There is one at six for the North, m'sieur; it is the express for Calais."

"Allez, alors!"

As the cab rolled away upon the Boulevard, the now thoroughly awakened porter bethought himself of a sin of omission, and rushed wildly in pursuit, with a tiny note in his hand which had come at midnight for monsieur; but it was a vain chase, and the brave *garçon* came back breathless with a rueful face, the more rueful as the delivery of those pretty, crest-bearing missives had ever been to him a most momentous, important matter. And a sound rating he got from Monsieur Somers, that day, for having failed to repair his neglect. "To think," that desolated gentleman said to himself, as he held the note before him, twelve hours later, "that it might have stopped him!"

Charley dozed feverishly in the train up

to Calais; he felt badly, but attributed his illness to loss of sleep, and fought off the chill with his flask; and there was something so inspiriting in the thought of getting back to grave, homelike old London, which loomed up in his fancy now as a great, secure refuge ahead, that it nerved him to resist the growing weakness. It was a bitter, drizzling day on the Channel, with a legion of storm-devils howling down from the North Sea; but he had turned hot by that time, and walked the deck careless of rain and cold. Only when he sat in the train *en route* to London did he begin to suspect he was really ill, and find his strength deserting him. He was barely able to drag himself to a cab at Ludgate Hill and order the driver to his hotel in Saint Martin's le Grand.

"The seasickest Frenchman you never saw!" cabbie informed divers of his *confrères* over the traditional "bucket of water and 'two' of gin," "what wanted to *allay veet* to the —— 'Otel for *bun pubwar!*"

Limited as was that worthy's acquaintance with the French tongue, it quite covered the significance of the last word, and he had whirled Charley around to Aldersgate as only a Jehu of the London streets may do.

At the hotel Charley went to bed, and after some hours of increasing distress sent for a physcian. It was not too soon; at midnight he was in a raging fever, which was only diverted from his head to take the equally serious form of acute inflammation of the lungs, — his old weak spot. He hung between life and death for days; but his attendant was a man of skill, who kept him in the sleepless care of an accomplished nurse, and he rallied at last, feebly indeed, but surely. His convalescence was slow, and the spring had worn away to its latest month before he was strong enough to get upon his feet. It was a memorable time; and among the last to fade from his recollection will be those long, thoughtful, regenerating days, when he lay so weak and helpless in the very heart of London, a shipwrecked waif upon that vast ocean of life. With all its myriad voices he grew familiar; in the long night-watches he learned the very tones of the time-bells; the solemn echo of St. Paul's, the historic ring of St. Saviour's, which for centuries had sung the death-song for the condemned of Old Bailey; the silver clamor of Bow Bells, and the clear but distant notes of St. Mary's le Strand. These alone spoke in the brief pause of darkness; but with the hint of day the murmur of life began again, swelling with the dull light of early morning into a million-tongued roar, eloquent yet unintelligible. The laden omnibuses tearing down to the Bank, with some merry trumpeter on the box, waking the echoes of the "highest ground" with a silver note; the sharper rattle of motley vehicles; the cry of fleet newsboys and lagging hucksters; the ragman's bells; the tramp of parading volunteers, or clatter of little feet as charity-school children trudged by; — all floated in at his window, conveying in one tremendous voice all the immeasurable life that dwells under the name of London. Well might one grow sober and humble at thought of all those millions of sorrow-burdened hearts, and turn to ponder anew upon the sorrows and the resources of his own.

In these passive days he grew strong, morally as well as physically, and he rose from his bed a changed man.

The day when he might be moved came round at last.

"We must have you out of this," said Duncan, "and down among the green fields, or, what is better, by the sea. I have taken the liberty to arrange it all for you, though my part is in simply turning you over to a professional friend at Ventnor. He has found a place where you will have quiet, home care, and, if medical assistance should be needed, I can recommend him fully as my successor. But all you require now is air and discretion, and you will be yourself again in a short time. You have had a narrow escape, and I suspect there was not much excuse for your danger. Ah! you young men! If I had the ruling of it, none of you should go to Paris till you were as gray, at least, as I am!"

So Charley went down to the Isle of Wight, and was lodged in a pretty cottage in the Undercliff. The May roses were already blooming about the door, while over the sand the familiar Atlantic stretched away before him in sunny glory. Here the days sped swiftly; but each brought a gain of health and strength.

Down at that other cottage by the Mediterranean, the early April days brought the date fixed for beginning the long-canvassed Italian tour. Richard Huntley still lingered with the party, but said he should only remain to see them safely over the border, and then take his way to the North. To the urgency of Clare and the frankly expressed wish of her mother that he would accompany them, he returned the same half-sad, half-smiling reply, and waited ever for the other voice. But Emma kept silence; the poor heart no longer knew itself. The farewell rambles came at last; long, dreamy, and regretful, among the fragrant orange-trees, and along the terraces carpeted with scarlet anemones; and in one of them he said to her, "Once I asked you, Miss Emma, if I might go with you on a long voyage; may I ask again now?"

And she answered simply, as in a daze, "If you will, Mr. Huntley," giving him her hand as she spoke.

She too had come to regard the gift as inevitable, and she thought of it, if without marked emotion, at least quietly and without dread. Now when he put her hand tenderly to his lips, and gravely and without show of passion spoke his love, it made her even a little glad and thankful. He had been so good, so patient and devoted to her, that sometimes she felt borne down by a weight of obligation, and she was happier now in the thought of making payment. She was not sure she loved him, certainly she did not as she had loved *the other;* but she had more than once asked herself if this serious, grateful regard which had grown to its full measure was not better than that wearing passion of the old days.

He knew her feeling, and made it his guide, as he drew her away to the shade of a gray old olive, and spoke long and soberly in words that soothed the little tumult of her heart.

"As the years go, Emma, I am almost an old man beside you," he said, holding her hand softly, so softly that from time to time her eyes met his with a momentary courage, lingering ever longer and less timidly; "and it might be said of me, perhaps, that a varied and eventful life has aged me beyond my years; yet, without egotism, I would question if what the world or many in it will call your sacrifice in marrying one so much your senior is really such. Little worthy of you as I am, I should have been far less so twenty years ago. I was no worse than most young men of my class; but when I look at you as you are, and recall myself at twenty-five, I recoil from the comparison. As a young man, I feel I should have failed utterly to understand or appreciate your beautiful character — ah, yes, it is more beautiful and noble than you can know! — while, as a young man, I should have exacted that passionate sentiment which young men so falsely estimate. How incomparably superior is the affection you give me now. You cannot know how I value it; you shall only see how I will strive to retain it, perhaps to make it grow. You have made me very happy, darling, and men at my age do not hold that rare boon lightly. It shall be the leading purpose of my future life to make you happy also. May God judge me as I keep to that purpose!"

It was late when the ramblers returned that night. Huntley led Emma to Mrs. Jennings by the hand with a proud smile; the blushing girl was only too glad of "the mamma's" sheltering bosom when he released her.

"I am going with you to Italy!" he cried, gayly.

"It's not a compliment to my powers of persuasion, monsieur," said the lady with a laugh, though there were tears in the eyes which looked at him over Emma's bent head; "just like all the men, you must be bought over at a high price — "

"And when you get us we prove sad bargains, — eh?" He was like a child in his happiness. Mrs. Jennings looked at him maliciously, as if she were studying a penance for him, but he only beamed more gayly.

"We will work you well, at any rate; and you may begin, Sir Richard, at once, by engaging our *vettura*, and a nice one, mind!"

"A triumphal car, madame; we will enter Rome as the conquerors did. Shall it be the captive elephants of Hannibal or — "

"Go along; from this promising beginning I presume we shall have a series of magnificent absurdities to the end of the chapter."

"Trust me, dear Mrs. Jennings, I'll be awfully good," he said, laughing; but adding with infinite tenderness, as he turned to go, "do you also take good care of my darling."

"You dear puss!" cried the lady, when he had gone, kissing the still blushing face, "I am delighted, he is such a splendid man!"

"I am glad you are pleased," was the low reply; "he has been so good to me, I hope I shall make him happy."

"Of course you will! Why, the man is mad with joy, poor fellow! Here is Clare, the child must be put out of misery, she has been in a fever of suspense for a month!"

Emma wished to be married at home, and opposed any other proposition with unyielding firmness; so it was determined that after Italy and some weeks at Paris, they should all go home together. Clare vowed that nothing should prevent her assisting at the wedding, and Mrs. Jennings was not altogether sorry to change her plans and return to America.

"We can come out again when we like; it's a small affair when it has been once accomplished; and, to tell the truth, I am homesick for dear New York!"

"O yes, we can all come again next winter, and have our nice times all over again; can't we, Mr. Huntley?" cried the joyous Clare.

"To be sure we can!" returned that gentleman, to whom the present and future were alike *couleur de rose.*

They were nearly two months in Italy, and, lingering a week in Switzerland afterwards, did not arrive at Paris until June, where their stay was made brief, in order

that they might avail themselves of the smooth Atlantic of early summer. Huntley found unusual difficulty in securing their passage across. The Cunard steamers were taken up with full lists for weeks ahead, and he was eventually compelled to take staterooms on a steamer of another line. They made efforts at Paris to communicate with Charley, but could learn nothing whatever of his whereabouts. Huntley informed himself fully through Somers of the young man's mysterious disappearance, but was discreetly silent even to Mrs. Jennings; the utter absence of any clew puzzled him, and gave him considerable uneasiness. The Baronne, he learned, had left the city, immediately after Charley's departure, for her chateau, to "assist," as the Parisian world said, at the demise of Baron Choisy, who was gathered to his ancestors soon after. Beyond this nothing was known; at the banker's no word whatever had been received from Mr. Wales, nor had any wandering soul succeeded in this instance in tracing him to a hiding-place. The gossips themselves, having exhausted their wits on the subject, finally compromised upon the hypothesis that a reconciliation had been effected between the young man and Nina, and that he was only awaiting in seclusion the passage of a saving interval, after which the *monde* expected nothing less than a marriage of *veuve* Choisy and "the American." Huntley was pleased finally to accept this view of the case as favorable to his ends; though Somers declared it was "all wrong," and so much of the story as related to the expected alliance he communicated to Mrs. Jennings, who in turn conveyed it carefully to Emma. If the latter was especially disappointed, she gave no visible evidence of it beyond saying very quietly, "I should have liked to see my cousin very much."

Did she then misjudge herself? Perhaps; at any rate, Richard Huntley, who heard the words with a chill, said in his soul, "I am desperately glad you did not!" Matters followed their rapid course; and at noon precisely, on the 22d of June, they steamed out of Liverpool harbor for home, and Huntley's heart was glad.

CHAPTER XVIII.

REVELATION.

I HAVE said that the time sped pleasantly for Charley at his new home in "stately Wight"; but the words fail to express the quiet enjoyment of those days, in which the sweet sense of returning health gave a glad and grateful tone to surroundings of a thoroughly homelike character, as rare as they were delightful to our hero. He was the guest of a widow lady, whose slender income received additions by the occasional contributions of one or more invalid lodgers like himself, coming to her, as he had done, at the advice of the principal physician of the place. The household consisted of the mistress, her aged father, and two children, boys of twelve and fourteen. There was, besides, an invalid lady of a certain age, who seldom left her chamber, and held coldly aloof from "the American" until that charitable young man quite won her over by deferential attentions and the grateful acceptance of a budget of Church publications. Charley was especially interested in his hostess, whose winning and motherly manner was marked by a settled melancholy that appealed powerfully to his sympathy. Her age was a puzzle; but he was quite sure that the worn face, which had once been very lovely, and the silvered hair, were aged rather by suffering than by years. Had he required her care, he felt how gentle and tender a nurse she would have been; but that need was past. It was wonderful how he rallied in the bracing sea air, and felt the lost strength coming back with every breath; and it was only when he faced himself in the mirror, and looked curiously at the thin, white features, thrown into vivid relief by a thick, dark beard, that he realized the "facts" again; though even at these he only smiled now in the fulness of his spirits.

He made himself a great favorite at the cottage in a little time, winning all hearts with his pleasant words, and demolishing the prejudices of the elders against his "Yankee" blood, with never-varying good-humor. With the old gentleman, who was a quaint relic of the smaller commercial class of London, he would sit up to any hour, over mild gin-and-water, and listen without weariness to endless reminiscences of Kent Road and the "City" of fifty years back; while with the boys, fine, manly fellows, whose dark, un-English faces always stirred some undefinable memory in his heart, he shook off ten heavy years, joining them in their boating, paddling for shrimps, and "larking" in a hundred ways, for days together. Not but that he had many sober hours, even sad ones, in which the life to come was studied bravely and hopefully, though not without some pain; but in this holiday-time and day of deliverance, as it sometimes seemed to be, there was much that was joyous, and of this he made the most.

"You are getting strong so fast we shall lose you some fine day soon, I fear," said the widow, a little sadly, when June with its daily pilgrimage of city wanderers, intent on Carisbrook and Osborne House, had come.

"Indeed, Mrs. Delafield, I had scarcely thought of it, it is so delightful here, and you have made it seem like home to me. Yes, I must go soon."

"Shall you return to New York, Mr. Wales?" she asked, thoughtfully.

"Yes, I think so; not to remain there, perhaps, but for a time, certainly."

After a moment of silence the lady continued, flushing slightly as she spoke, "Some day before you go, Mr. Wales, will you allow me to inflict something of my history upon you? If you knew it, you might do me a service in America."

"I should be glad indeed of the opportunity to do that, to do anything in my power for you, Mrs. Delafield. I shall always owe you a debt, and welcome any chance of paying you in part. I must think more of going now, too. I have been reluctant to do it heretofore."

Yes, he would go back to New York. There had been a nervous shrinking when he first approached that determination; no moment probably was more trying to the prodigal than that in which he mastered the stubborn heart and resolved to go back in humility to his father's house, to face the gibes and sneers, and win back the difficult favor of the world; but he met it bravely, and grew strong in the resolve. If it were permitted him, he would try to win forgiveness of his father. He would ask no further favors, as he had still something of his own; and in some of the countless avenues, in some one of those marvellous growing Western cities perhaps, he could begin the new life, surround himself with new associations, and grow to fill some useful place. They were brave pictures, and he found a deep gratification in drawing them, and sometimes a strong impulse to hasten away to their accomplishment; but this he checked. He would do nothing more hastily or blindly as long as he lived. He thought often of his cousin, too, with a sad humility that was void of bitterness. The scene on the Corniche was very vivid in his memory, and he imagined her now only as the wife of Richard Huntley, and bowed to the fate.

"He will make her happy because he will appreciate her. How things come about!" he said to the sands. "I could not have borne the thought once. Heigho! here are the boys. Well, what is it? a row? I'm with you; I have got quite strong with the oars again."

"So you have, Mr. Charles, — so you have!"

He lingered in the island for more than a fortnight after that brief conversation with the widow; but he had set a day, meanwhile, for his departure, and like all set days it came around very soon. It was only on the preceding afternoon that, having delicately reminded his hostess of her proposed commission, and repeated the assurance of the pleasure it would give him to serve her in any way, he received from her lips the promised narrative. It was in the privacy of the little parlor, the scene of many pleasant memories to Charley, who little dreamed of the great event which was at hand to make it more than memorable.

"You will not find my story a very happy one, Mr. Wales," she began, with a sad smile, and evidently with some effort. There was a pitiful, appealing expression in her face that won all his sympathy at the start, and instinctively he took the thin hand and held it while she spoke. "If I did not know your good heart, I should not burden you with my sorrows; but it has been my hope for years to meet with an American in whom I could confide, and you have seemed almost like an answering messenger to my prayer. You will think me weak and foolish, it may be, when you know all, and the one hope in life I retain; but there are ties in life, Mr. Wales, from which no woman's heart can free itself. I am not a widow; I am only a deserted wife. I feel sure that my husband still lives, though I have heard no word from him for twelve years. May God forgive me if I do him wrong! he may have died even in those days so long ago; but I cannot stifle the voice of my heart, which always tells me he is alive, and that I shall see him again." She paused a moment, and turned away to brush two stubborn tears from her eyes, while Charley silently pondered on this explanation of the stricken face. "It sounds strange to you," she continued, "and scarcely less so to me, listening to my own words; in all these years it has seemed a bitter dream. I can never realize it, and am always thinking I shall wake again, and find him with me. It has been hard, Mr. Wales. One day I was a young, happy wife — O, so happy! — and the next as you see me now, alone in the world."

"But have you never had any tidings, no clew — ?"

"Never but once, and then a mere straw. I had best tell you all the story. Fifteen years ago we lived on Clapham Rise, — you know it, — over on the Surrey side. My mother was living then; but I was the only child left at home, all my brothers having married and scattered. We had a large house, and mother was one of those old-fashioned, busy women who live in a constant state of occupation; she had always had a great family to look after, and it made her miserable to be so solitary and have so little to do, especially as father was absent a great deal of the time at Portsmouth, assisting my eldest brother in busi-

ness; so, though we did not need to do it, we took in gentlemen lodgers. Among them were two young men who engaged our best suite of rooms at a liberal price, making them partially their lodgings. They were of about the same age, and both very handsome men; evidently wealthy and aristocratic, and very great friends. They led gay lives; sometimes large parties of fine gentlemen would call for them, and in the season a great many notes and invitations arrived for them by every post. We believed then that they were younger sons of noble families, who took the rooms for convenience, as many of that class do. Well, to come to my part, the gentlemen were always very gracious and polite to me, and the elder — we always thought him the elder by a few years — grew attentive at last. I was a rather attractive girl, I suppose; and being the only daughter in a large family of brothers, I had been made much of. My poor father gave me every opportunity to become accomplished, and I had improved my advantages fairly; mother was very proud, I remember, of my music and drawing, and I must have been a little conscious; a little vain, perhaps, as the boys all called me 'The Duchess.' Mother was watchful, and did not like Mr. Delafield's attention to me; but I was headstrong and followed the usual course of girls, giving him ample return, until we had a final acknowledgment of mutual affection. Our courtship ended happily, however; he told father who he was, very frankly, and asked my hand in marriage, only stipulating that the ceremony should be kept secret for a time from his family. He belonged to the nobility, and had been an officer in India and a great deal abroad, on government service; but at that time and for some reason I never learned, he was on bad terms with his brother, who was the head of the family. We were married privately, only two or three of his friends being present, and then went down to a cottage he had rented at Richmond, where we lived very happily for more than a year, and where William was born. My husband was away from me a great deal in London, but continued always very loving and devoted when at home, and I was perfectly content and happy. He never told me much of his life; he seemed always to be waiting for a reconciliation with his brother, and often said that we should go into the world some day, and meet his people; but I cared very little for that, and told him so; he was the world to me. And I think — I *know*, he loved me then. He was so good to me, and he could be very passionate and terrible to others, as I had opportunities of knowing. No, that doubt has never added to my sorrow; for even now, after years of thinking, I know my husband loved me."

She paused a moment, and Charley felt the clasp of her fingers tightening, but unconscious, on his own.

"His friend visited us often at the cottage; except my parents, he was the only one who came, and I sometimes fancied that he and Robert were engaged together in some sort of business, though perhaps it was only horse-racing. I never asked my husband about such things. The gentleman was a very pleasant, merry man, and we used to have delightful evenings together when he was there.

"Well, about eighteen months after our marriage, this man came one day in great haste to the villa, and asked for Robert, who was not at home. He then hurried away, after telling me not to be alarmed if I did not see my husband that night, or even for several days. Then I got a note from Robert in the evening, saying that business would take him away, perhaps for a week. It was more than a week before I heard again, and then a letter came from him at Paris, saying he would soon return; but I was to leave the house at Richmond, and meet him at my father's. I began to be frightened by all this mystery, but did as he bade me, though it wrung my heart to leave the cottage; I had slept under its roof every night since our marriage. He came back a few days afterwards, as he had said, and joined me at Clapham. He looked pale and worn, and seemed to have tried to disguise himself by shaving his face clean. I was sure there was some trouble, and asked him what it was. He said it was all along of 'poor Ned' and the 'Jews,' but he could n't tell me any more then, and I must n't worry, as it would all come right. He did not go out at all for two days; but one or two men came in the evenings, and he had long, private interviews with them in the library. The second night he came up very late to our room. I was in bed, but lay awake awaiting him; but he said he must write some letters and I must go to sleep; I did so, while he was writing at the table. In the night I woke up with a start; he was standing over me, looking at me very strangely. When he saw I was awake, he bent down and kissed me, and said, 'Go to sleep again, puss; I am not through yet'; and went back to the table. I did fall asleep again, Mr. Wales, I was such an unsuspecting, happy child! In the morning he was not there; he had gone out in the night, and I have never seen him since."

It *was* a strange story, and Charley sat silent and thoughtful at its close; while Mrs. Delafield dried her tears and choked down a sob or two which came at the last.

"I suppose there had been some — some trouble," she resumed, "and I know my father knew something which he never told me; but I believe my husband was incapable of crime, and I know he loved me. He need not have hesitated to tell me all; he must have known how gladly I would share any misfortune with him. I think now it was some trouble of his friends into which Robert had been dragged; but it makes no difference. For weeks and months I watched for his return with unfading hope, — yes, for years. My other boy was born, and the care of my babies, who were both sickly children, kept my thoughts occupied. At last, however, I broke down completely. I was ill a long time, and this misfortune, I think, killed my mother, who sorrowed as deeply as myself. I should have followed her, but for the children; I came back to life for them. We gave up the house at Clapham, and came down here to live; father had gone out of business and was glad of the change, and it was a good thing both for him and the boys. We have been here now nearly eight years, and it has made men of them."

"Once, you said, you heard something?"

"Yes; I have yet to explain why I tell you all this. It is only an uncertain hope, but it *is* a hope, the only one I have. One of my brothers was in America and spent some time in New York. He knew my husband, and one day he saw a man in the street who resembled him very much, so much that Tom will almost swear to-day that it was Robert. He tried to reach him, but lost him in the crowd. Afterwards he made efforts through the papers and police to gain the desired information, and found a great many Delafields, but not the one he sought. He is very clever too, is Tom; but, of course, he could not do so well as one at home in the city might."

"But," suggested Charley, "you could have seen his brother."

"We did. My father went to him, but he is a hard, cold man; he listened to father's story, and then said we had the advantage of him by several years in a knowledge of his brother's whereabouts; that they had been strangers for a long period, and he disclaimed the connection entirely. He said other heartless things. I don't remember them. I wondered he could be Robert's brother."

Charley could not regard it as very wonderful, all things considered; but he reflected in silence.

"Now you see why I told you," Mrs. Delafield said, finally, with some embarrassment, but with wistful eyes. "I thought you might — O Mr. Wales, if you should ever see him! I brought this to show you; will you try and remember it? It was taken thirteen years ago, but it is wonderfully preserved."

She handed him a daguerreotype, as she spoke, turning at the same moment to the door, where one of the boys was begging for admittance. The picture was that of a tall, handsome man with drooping mustaches, slight, military side-whiskers, and large, black eyes, far apart, but retaining much of their piercing expression on the faithful plate. It was a face not to be forgotten or mistaken, and one upon which fifteen years between thirty and fifty could work little change. Charley recognized it at a glance. It was the face of the man he had known as Richard Huntley! "Great God!" was his startled exclamation.

"Did you speak?" asked the lady, returning from the door.

"No — that is — I was struck by this face," he stammered, without raising his eyes from the portrait, which seemed to dance and multiply itself under his gaze.

"He was very handsome," she said, in a low tone, "with wonderful dark eyes, and the clearest complexion I ever saw in a man. There was just a little mark on his temple that came in India; he used to be worried about it sometimes."

Charley started again; he remembered the mark. Out of the chaos of his thoughts a strange one took shape.

"And his friend, the one who lodged with him, you knew his name?"

"O yes, we tried to find him, but without success. He went abroad, we heard. Somers, Edward Somers, was his name; we did n't know anything about his family."

Charley longed to be alone.

"You will let me take this a moment and make a little sketch of it?" he asked.

"Of course. O Mr. Wales! there, I won't be foolish." And the poor woman turned her tear-stained face to the window as he left her and hurried to his room, blessing him in her heart for the hope he had made to spring up there.

Once in his chamber he put down the portrait, and stood transfixed before it. What was to be done, or, rather, what was to be done first? Tell her all? It would require time, make painful complications, perhaps delay; and the vision of Emma, she whom he loved, going blindly to a frightful fate, rose before him at the thought, and overshadowed all other considerations. Had it already overtaken her? He almost crushed the pictured face before him as this possibility entered his mind. And all these precious, fatal days he had been lingering there in ignorance! Action, swift and instant, must be his watchword now.

He looked at his watch; there was a train up to London in an hour. Luckily his preparations were all made; he had

arranged to go in the morning, and his trunks were packed. In spite of his trembling hand he managed to make a hurried *croquis* of that face; he could have hit it almost as well from memory. Mrs. Delafield marvelled at the likeness, but said quickly, "You have left out the whiskers!"

"Yes, they were not necessary, and I hurried over it. Your revelation has spurred my conscience, Mrs. Delafield, given me another incentive to hasten home; so I have determined to lose no more time, but go up to London to-night."

"Ah! but to-morrow will do as well; we shall be sorry to miss this last evening."

"And so shall I; but I have already delayed too long. I mean to catch Saturday's steamer at Liverpool, and I must go over to Paris first; so you see there is a great deal of travelling to be done in a short time. I shall save a day by going up to-night."

"You know best, of course; but you must not overdo yourself. You know you are not quite so strong yet as you were."

Bidding her good by, Charley said to her in a low voice, "I shall find your husband; I know it, and promise it."

She embraced him with uncontrollable joy, but could not speak. She wondered why he had shuddered when she kissed him.

The old gentleman and the boys went with him to the station, which was close at hand. On the walk thither, while the boys were running ahead, the elder said, interrogatively, "My daughter has told you the sad story of her life, I think?"

"Yes; I was deeply pained by it," answered Charley.

After a moment Mr. Raygood continued: "I need hardly tell you that she was quite blind to the real character of her husband, and has always remained so. We thought it best that she should. He was a criminal, sir; influence and name alone saved him from penal service."

Charley heard the words with a dull pain. How he had been duped in this man! But what he had done seemed insignificant compared with what he might still do. "It was criminal to leave his wife as he did," he said, mechanically.

"I cannot think any benefit would come to her through his return, even if that were possible," added the old man.

By this time they had reached the station; the boys had come up, and Charley made no reply. Five minutes later he was steaming away to Ryde.

At Portsmouth he learned that he could take a steamer from Southampton to Havre that night; but a quick calculation showed the London route to be the shortest in time; so on to the city he went. He was at Waterloo at six o'clock, and had time to snatch a meal at Ludgate Hill before the night express for Dover. He had for a moment debated the question of stopping a day in London to see if anything could be learned there, but all his instincts moved him towards Paris. It seemed, also, as if Huntley would avoid London. At any rate, he determined to push on. Steam-speed seemed a foot-race to his impatience; but there was no delay. He dashed by St. Denis in the glow of sunrise, and was back at the great Station of the North when Paris was at its early coffee.

He left his modest luggage at the *gare*, and feed a sleepy *cocher* munificently to drive him quickly to the Grand Café, which, of course, that immovable functionary insisted upon doing at the traditional trot. The bank doors in the Rue Scribe were not yet opened, and he went in to get some breakfast at the *café*, where his not very elegant exterior was irreverently commented upon by sundry *garçons* in spotless waistcoats and the whitest of neck-ties. They were far from recognizing *l'enfant de l'Amérique* of six months before, whose appearance had been the signal for the fleetest of movements and the most graceful *Que veut-il prendre, monsieur?*

"You don't know me?" asked Charley, quietly, of the elegant gentleman who poured his coffee.

"*Mais non; pour le moment, monsieur. Pardon!* have I ever had the honor —?"

"*Tant mieux!*" said Charley, indifferently. "Know you if Monsieur Somers is in Paris?"

"At this moment Monsieur Somers is in Paris."

"Merci! l'addition."

The knight of the napkin brought the *note* in a daze, and remained in a daze when Charley tossed a *louis* on the plate, and went out.

"Voilà un homme!" said the immaculate, with great dignity to his mates. "On ne peut juger jamais le vin par l'etiquette. Parbleu! cinq francs de pourboire plus quatre-vingt centimes!"

Charley went at once to the banker's, and walked directly into the inner office with a beating heart. A principal, seated at his desk, looked up in surprise.

"I beg pardon," said Charley with a tremulous voice, "can you tell me if Mrs. Jennings and party are still in Europe?"

"Ah! they will tell you outside," was the curt reply. It had at least the good effect of quieting Charley's pulse like a dash of water.

"Thank you. I am Mr. Wales of New York. Do you happen to have any letters for me?"

"Mr. Wales! is it possible? A thou-

sand pardons. I did not recognize you. You are wonderfully changed. Letters? I will inquire — "

"And Mrs. Jennings's address, if you please."

"Ah, yes! they were going home soon, I think. Brooks, have Mrs. Jennings and party sailed for home yet?"

"Sail in the —— on the 22d, sir."

"When!" cried Charley.

"The 22d; to-morrow, sir," the clerk repeated.

"From Liverpool, of course. They were here a few days since only; the young lady invalid quite recovered, I understood. There was a gentleman with them who inquired after you, — Mr. Hunt— "

"Yes, I know; and *Miss Howland* was quite well?"

"I was told so. There has been a great deal of inquiry for you, Mr. Wales. Ah! here are some letters."

"Thank you. Can you tell me whether I could catch this steamer?"

"To-morrow's steamer?"

"Yes."

"It 's a chance. There is a tidal train by the Boulogne and Folkstone route at one o'clock, I think. By that you *might* catch a night express on the Northwestern, and be in Liverpool by morning."

"Thank you. Will you have my account balanced? I will call for it. Good morning."

Going out Charley glanced at the register, and felt a second thrill of satisfaction in seeing the name "Miss Howland" therein, even though it was written in the bold hand of Huntley. But he *must* catch the steamer; and he grew hot and cold by turns, thinking of the chances. Once he was tempted to telegraph something to Mrs. Jennings and secure a delay; but it was only a momentary impulse: *that* resort would remain, thanks to science and cables, even if he missed the ship. He went in at Bowles's, and posted himself fully about the trains, though the result of his inquiries only confirmed the banker's statement; there was nothing earlier than the Boulogne "tidal." This gave him some hours to remain in the city, but they were unwelcome ones. There was nothing he cared for there, and he rejoiced in the natural disguise which concealed his identity so effectually from more than one well-known eye. He read his letters, but they were all of ancient dates, and none, as he faintly hoped, from his father or cousin. Then he went to the Malesherbes, and met with a touching and melodramatic reception from the *concierge*. In the old quarters nothing was changed. Somers's room showed signs of recent occupation, and his own was in perfect order and readiness.

"He orders it so, monsieur; all the weeks he makes me to change the linen on the bed. He is *desolé* because monsieur goes to come never again."

Charley dismissed her and flung himself upon a sofa in the little *salon*-parlor, *fumoir*, and consultation-room of those other days. How strange and unreal it all seemed! Only the windows opened there with the same soft air of summer wafting in, as of a year before, with the shadows of the incipient Haussmannic trees falling across the sills, and Madame's cherished family of canaries chirping away below, seemed curiously home-like and real. One's earliest memories of particular places are ever the most vivid; and here Charley's Paris life had begun only a year before! It seemed an age, with all the phantasmagoria of scenes and faces dancing in the glass of memory. For the first time since he had entered the gates, he thought of *her* with a dull sensation of pain, perhaps of pity. A step on the stairs put the thought to flight; it might be Somers. He cared not if it was or was not; that individual had small prominence in his present plans, though he would have chosen, perhaps, not to see him.

It *was* Somers. He came in puffing with the noon heat, and stopped short as his eye fell on the recumbent figure. He had missed the *concierge* and was unwarned.

"Well!" he cried with a short laugh, "here 's a go! By Jove! I admire monsieur's graceful *abandon*. May I inquire to whom— ? Good God! is it you, Charley?"

"Why not?" was the cold response.

"Why not, indeed? why not months ago? Heavens, how altered you are! you don't look well. You are not refusing my hand, are you, old boy?"

He had come up and extended his own, but Charley lay quite motionless, looking at him steadily but rather indolently.

"It looks like it, does n't it? I am only wondering now, Ned Somers, whether you too are a villain, or only a victim!"

The Englishman flushed scarlet, and Charley, still watching him steadily, saw big drops gather on his forehead.

"I don't know what you mean, Charley," he said, sadly. "I never did you an intentional wrong; and if I lent myself to such a purpose, it was in simple ignorance and because I had no choice. I don't think I am quite a villain, as you put it; but I am a victim fast enough, God knows!"

Charley was silent; Somers sat down, but instantly got up again and walked nervously up and down the room.

"I don't know what you may have discovered; I *can't* know, because the whole affair in which you and Dick Huntley have figured in some secret connection has been

an inexplicable mystery to me from first to last. My only active part in it, if you care to know, was getting you away from Paris last September, and you will hardly accuse me of having forced you much on that occasion. I got occasional orders from Huntley; that was one of them; and there were pretty powerful reasons for my attending to them, though, had I known you then as I did later, I should have faced the risk and refused all share in what I suspected from the first was a scheme against you, despite your own representations of the strong friendship which existed between you and him. What was the nature of that scheme, I know not; I never could form an idea of it. I am not the sort of a man to parade my affections, but I don't think you will doubt my subsequent friendship for you."

Charley kept stubborn silence; he was thinking of what he might learn from this man, and whether it would repay the effort. Somers was at the end of his rope, sure of nothing and fearful of everything.

"One morning you got some news or something that cut you up badly. We went to the Helder afterwards, and I asked you whether Huntley kept up his 'friendly' correspondence with you; you remember, perhaps —"

"Yes, I think I do."

"Well, I had it on my lips then to tell you of my suspicions and warn you against him. *I* knew him — my God! I should think so! He ruined *my* life, and I expected nothing less than that he would ruin yours. Well, you remembered an engagement at the Baronne's, and left me at the critical moment, and I never had the courage to do it afterwards."

"You would have saved much pain to several persons, if you had," said Charley, quietly, looking at his watch as he spoke.

Somers noted the movement, and said with bitter dejection, "My position was a hard one, you could not know how hard."

"No, I could only suspect," said Charley, rising; "something dating back to the notable association of Somers and Delafield perhaps. There, never mind; it is quite out of my way, and it is only with him I have to deal. So far as you are concerned, I am willing to take you at your word as being a victim of that infernal scoundrel; it could hardly be a nice position, and I am sorry for you. I must go now; I am going over to London by the afternoon express. You can have my things packed up and sent to store at the bank at your convenience. It is not likely we shall ever meet again; so good by, old fellow."

"But — Charley — a moment —"

"I really have n't more time, Ned. I would n't miss the train for all Paris, and I don't think we need to talk any more. I bear you no ill-will; we are good quits, *adieu!*"

Poor Ned Somers! many a shattered dream had marked his earthly pilgrimage, and many a disappointment darkened the day that followed a rosy morning, but few more bitter than this. Ever hopeful as he was, he had watched patiently all these days for Charley's return, and doubted not. And the cherished picture of the future, the "seigniorial dignities," the metamorphosed chateau dearer than those of Spain, the "boar-steaks" and the red, red wines of matchless Chambertin, all glowed as brightly as ever in his prophetic soul, more brightly even, since the "stomach" was no more. It was a big hope that swelled the colossal heart, and it died hard. Voisin's *menu* was rubbish that day; and for the first time in the memory of man, *l'aimable Anglais* lost his temper over a paltry matter of francs at *picquet* at the club. Some days later he went rather less joyously than usual down to the loved shades of Trouville-sur-mer. Let us hope that there was a balm in Calvados for the bruised heart; in these pages he appears no more.

Charley found an unsatisfactory state of things at Boulogne. A gale was blowing up channel, and there was a doubt about starting the boats; but some titled dignitary, who happened to be *en route*, exercised the "divine right" with considerable spirit, and the potency of rank, if it could not quite still the sea, made the ship to go down thereon, much to Charley's satisfaction. The crossing was perilous, and occupied twice the ordinary time, so that he reached London full two hours late for the midnight train to the Northwest. There was another at an early hour, which he was told would catch the steamer, and he waited in sleepless excitement and at last went off, leaving his luggage behind. Arrived at Liverpool he sped to the steamer office; he was only just in time, and no accommodations were to be had but a steerage berth. He paid the modest charge for this without wasting a second of time in hesitation, and went aboard in the very last boat.

The deck of the broad poop was thronged with cabin passengers, and from his position below he scanned the faces with a beating heart. He did not see those he sought, but he knew they — *she* was there; he had seen the names on the list at the office; and now, as he made his way across the busy open deck to a quiet corner, they greeted his eyes again from the billets of a great multitude of portmanteaus. He got away by himself and leaned against the bulwark as the vessel slowly gathered her huge strength and swung around in the stream. His heart was full of gladness and unutterable con-

tent, and a thrill of ecstasy traversed his heart as they swung clear of the shipping and moved off with the bow to the west. No chance could part them now; he was there with her, once more *with her*, and in that strangely binding atmosphere of ship-life; there to see her, to breathe the air she breathed, and sleep within the sound of her voice, to watch and guard and save her. Above all the roar of voices and the deep thunder of those never-silent shafts and cylinders, above the rush of the winds and the sharp flapping of the unfurled sails, one single voice spoke and re-echoed in his heart: "She is here! She is with you! Lose her not again!"

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE HOLLOW HAND.

CHARLEY lost no time in hunting up a functionary, and happened on the head-steward, to whom he stated his case, making it peculiarly attractive by the graceful transfer of a five-pound note. He was provided forthwith with an odd berth in the steward's cabin for the first night, with the promise of an arrangement which should secure him cabin accommodations on the morrow; to the table and poop free access at once was understood; the steward would explain matters to the captain directly.

Then Charley reflected: eventual recognition seemed inevitable if he became an inmate of the cabin, and recognition meant exposure on the instant for Huntley. Would it be well? The temptation to go in there, where she moved and slept, was wellnigh irresistible; yet did he resist it, for he thought of the shame and pain to which it might subject Emma and Mrs. Jennings, and he felt the moral impossibility of taking a recognized place by Huntley's side among them and holding his peace. It were less difficult, though it *was* hard, to bear the brief, self-imposed banishment, even with the galling thought of that soulless villain standing in relations of intimacy with his cousin. What these were he did not know, and only half surmised; but he was beginning to see through the dark mists of the past eighteen months pretty clearly; and in all his righteous hatred for the man, he did not ignore his powers. They were not married: how God had been thanked for that! And never for a moment did the belief torment him that she loved *him*.

He weighed his thoughts well, and then arranged with the stewards to keep his berth among them, and also to dine with their mess, giving up the cabin entirely, and to this plan he accommodated himself with great success. He also got a hat from one of them to replace his thin, silk travelling-cap, — a wide, black Van Dyck, which was at once comfortable and picturesque, — and after sleeping the night through like a babe, he mounted the bridge-deck the following morning at Queenstown and tested the completeness of his disguise by passing before Huntley, who was smoking a meditative cigar thereon. The momentary excitement in Charley's bosom, as he encountered the careless eye of the broker, awakened no corresponding emotion in that gentleman; he noticed simply a rather tall, rather thin, and altogether "seedy" personage with a profusion of dark beard and an absurdly large slouched hat, and associated the figure instinctively with unsuccessful artistic or literary proclivities. Charley was exultant and emboldened, while he also felt more forcibly than before how impossible it would be for him to speak the smiling lies of hypocrisy to this white-faced demon. He extended his restless promenades to the main deck and the gangway stairs, and persistently followed these lines for the next three days, though quite unrewarded for his pains. The sea was restless like himself, and the cabin people, after their unhappy fashion, nursed themselves in the pent air of their staterooms.

He had still some struggles with himself too, in these days, did Charley; it was agony to think of *her* just within there, suffering and ill, perhaps a little frightened by the sharp gusts that came chasing after them from the Kerry hills away out to sea, making the good ship plunge and shake her mane. He bribed a steward with a princely bribe for secret reports, and was made foolishly happy by the news that she kept strict privacy, and was as invisible to Huntley as himself.

"You — you do not see her?" he asked, with a rather ludicrous disregard of the proprieties.

"Me? Why, no; the stewardess tells me, you know."

"To be sure; not a word about me, you know, Burns."

"I takes you, sir; not a haccent!"

Whereupon Burns improves the first opportunity to enlarge mysteriously on this evident case of the affections to the smiling stewardess, with whom he is desperately enamored. "A gentleman all up his back; should n't wonder if it wuz a real *pell-meller!* Looks like a lay on the hother one, don't it? But *he's* the *real* swell." But the stewardess was wise, and the suspicion went no further.

Charley saw Huntley constantly; but the latter, self-contained as usual, noticed him no more, nor indeed any one else, but smoked endless cigars and walked the decks thoughtfully for hours together. Our hero, secure in his disguise, watched the man

with a strange interest, and marvelled at his nature, at once so evil and attractive, and it was in this study that his apprehension of the past grew to a settled conviction. In his long reveries by the rail, with this miracle of craft and deceit pacing before his eyes, his mind ran back over every little incident of their connection, resting painfully on that fatal night at Worthington's, struggling to gather the truth from the chaos of its memories. And over that shameful subsequent life he passed, with a shuddering suspicion that in some deep, mysterious way this man's brain had guided it. He was only human; and with this feeling in his soul, there came sometimes a mad desire to face the wretch in his nervous walk and hurl the accusation in his face. But he did better, saving his strength for the day of reckoning, and girding himself with patience.

He was at his jealous post on the bridge-deck, the fourth morning out, at an early hour. The sea had fallen in the night, and the bright, sunny morning had awakened bright, sunny hopes in his heart. Standing thus, and guarding the cabin gangway with hungry eyes, he felt his heart leap suddenly to his throat with one upward plunge that sent the blood flashing through all his veins, and, fairly dizzy, he leaned on the rail beside him, as two slight figures emerged and climbed awkwardly to the deck above, both marked by the pallor of illness, both ludicrously unsteady on their feet, but merry with laughter, and rejoicing in their escape from the cabin. Just as he had seen her last on the Italian hill, with the sea-wind tossing her hair, and an amused smile parting her lips, she stood with an arm laced in that of Clare, and looked out wonderingly on the waves, while her companion chattered like a free bird, and broke out into peals of ringing laughter at each little clumsy stagger. Poor Charley! It was hard to stand there with strained eyes and beating heart, watching the dear, familiar faces, and crushing down the longing to fly across to them which filled his heart, and shook him like a tempest.

A smothered exclamation near him caught his ear; and Huntley, tossing away his cigar, passed swiftly with an expression of mingled pleasure and vexation on his face. The sight braced him, and he sauntered across with well-affected carelessness and took up his regular promenade on the main deck, where he could glance up at the faces just above him, as he passed. He had twice traversed his little beat, when Emma's eyes, coming home from the sea, looked down and met his own just when he was nearest. She gave a little start and an exclamation, as he passed on; then he heard Huntley make some remark which brought a quick laugh from Clare, but none, as his heart told him, from the other. He paused by the bulwark to let the flush die out of his face, and then returned on his path and met the gaze of all three bravely. He recked little of Huntley's or Clare's, but in Emma's he read something which thrilled him to the soul. What was it? Commiseration, curiosity, eagerness, all were there, and *something else!* The look unmanned him, frightened him, indeed, and he hurried forward to hide himself. Every day now they came on deck, and every day Charley walked his beat, and was rewarded with that soft, puzzled glance from Emma. He had even seen her eyes fixed on him while he leaned over the side in the pauses of his march, and, without daring to ask himself its meaning, he carried the memory of it warm in his heart, and dreamed on it at night. They had smooth and delightful seas before coming on the Banks, and the evenings were lovely beyond description, the great ship careering landward beneath a moonlit sky and over a silver sea. Charley strayed into the forecastle (where he had long since "paid his footing" with more than one largess of "Jamaica") on one of these nights, while mirth and sailor-music filled the hour with the "watch below." They knew him there, and hailed his coming with a volley of rough welcomes, followed by loud calls for a song; and it would have warmed the hearts of those who know the hard truths of "foksul" life to have seen the silent enjoyment with which the poor fellows listened to Charley's ready songs, those familiar, plaintive home-ballads which are as dear to Jack's heart as double grog. Unnoticed by Charley, some of the passengers had come forward with an officer; Huntley was among them; and at the conclusion of a motley chorus, in which the seamen brought their weird minor notes into a striking *finale* to Charley's solo, Huntley pressed them to select a number of voices and come out to the main deck for the entertainment of the cabin. The men were only too glad of the chance, and only waited for the officer's permission, which was freely accorded. A group was then formed about the after hatchway, which boasted several very good untrained voices, with a surprising banjo-player and a clever violinist by way of orchestra; and Charley having accepted the leadership, an impromptu concert was given, heartily enjoyed by the cabin-passengers, who swarmed out upon the poop above.

There is a marvellous pathos in these cherished songs of below-decks, which are literally the sailors' hymns. Poor Foster is the saving genius of the forecastle, and his homely melodies will echo still on the seas when they are all but forgotten ashore. Their influence does more to soften the hard

lines of Jack's stormy life than all the hollow exhortations of the unsympathetic preacher. Such simple songs made up the programme, interspersed with several of those extravagant sea-ballads which Jack delivers with such exquisite unction that it is easy to see he more than half believes in the amphibious felicity of the lucky lad who was "married to a mer-mi-ad at the bottom of the dark blue sea!"

In order to add a crowning triumph to their performance, the men, who were like children in their unwonted enjoyment, surrounded Charley, and insisted on his singing the air to a favorite ballad, while they furnished their own peculiar chorus for each stanza. It was a worn thing, "Her Bright Smile Haunts me Still," and was sung to death years ago in country parlors; but in the esteem of the sailor, to whom "midnight on the sea" is something more than an idea, it is the very first of English songs after "Sweet Home," which last is ever sweetest to those who know no home.

Charley had a moment of hesitation; he had seen Emma standing with Clare in the front rank of the auditors, and the song was one which they had sung together scores of times in the old river-side home; it seemed to him that she could not fail to recognize his voice as he sang it. But he did sing it, and with a rare sweetness that silenced all other sounds, save the swash of the waves and the deep-down rumble of the unresting screw. It was an hour of delight, a scene of peaceful beauty, with the moon shining down on the dark figures of the singers, and the silent throng of the steerage folk, who had crept up timidly to see and listen; with the dimpled, splashing sea around them, beautiful but terrible in its solitude, and the brave, strong vessel gliding ever onward with spirit-speed under the changing stars. On more than one heart in the noiseless circle of the upper deck the spectacle left a deep and lasting impression.

"Is n't it lovely?" said Clare, under her breath, to Emma. She got no reply from the latter, who was listening with bent head and beating heart. When they went below afterwards, she saw tears on Emma's cheeks, but did not wonder at them; she had been very near such weakness herself.

"It was so like poor, dear Charley, — was n't it?"

If in the watches of that night, our hero could have looked in with spirit's eyes upon his cousin, he would have found her in tears, and, reading her bitter thoughts, would have felt a great joy tempered with the consciousness of her suffering. All those sleepless hours, with old Ocean beating dull echoes to her heart-throbs, as she lay by the ship's side, she struggled with her awakened soul, and sought to soothe back to its brief slumber the love that might sometimes sleep, but could never die. Poor tender child! was the weary trial never to end? They will smile among the sisterhood at the weak woman I have chosen for a heroine. She *was* weak; strong in no sense but an infant's innocence; wise only as simple-hearted Miranda, fain to bear the burden for Ferdinand, and formed for nothing but the strong sheltering arm.

The later days of the voyage were stormy, and the ladies were driven below to console themselves as they could with the thought that they were nearing home. Only once after the night of the song did Charley see his cousin, and this time she seemed rather to evade his eye. He thought she looked unhappy, too, and was glad to think the end would come soon. During these nights of storm he was constantly on deck. The grandeur of the angry sea and the brave struggle of the vessel on her way filled him with keen enjoyment. He extended his rambles to the poop, now deserted, and won the hearts of the officers by sharing their night-watches, and making many a long hour pleasant with merry talk. They called him the "fifth officer of the watch," and hailed his coming with welcomes.

They ran on soundings in a broken sunset, and the wind died away as they bore down along shore with only twelve hours' sail to port. On this last night Charley had strayed away by himself, and was leaning over the rail by the captain's life-boat, watching the flashes of the moon through broken masses of cloud as they were mirrored in the waves. He was busy with thought. To-morrow they would be in port. To-morrow his work would begin. It was a momentous reflection and it made him very serious, as he stood there in the gloom. A little thing broke in on his study; something was whipping against the ship just below him, and he peered curiously over to discover what it might be. Nothing, of course; only a long loop of the line with which the cutter's bow was lashed to the rail. The sailor had done his work carelessly, and an end of the line, becoming disengaged, hung down almost to the water-line and beat against the sides at every roll of the ship, like a tiny whip upon the insensible bulk of an elephant. Charley had ceased to think of it, and was wandering again, when he suddenly became conscious of a presence. Some one had come up to him, and, turning in some surprise, he found a tall figure at his elbow. The inevitable cigar blazing before the pale face told him who it was. He wished to avoid this encounter, and made a movement to go, but checked himself mechanically, as Huntley addressed him.

"Not so bad to-night," said the broker, in a friendly tone.

"No," returned Charley, in a low and indistinct voice. He would have given worlds to get away.

"We shall get in in good time to-morrow at this rate. She is walking along finely!"

Charley made no response.

"I wished to see you before we left the ship," continued Huntley, drawing nearer, "and thank you for your share of the entertainment the other evening, for the ladies as well as myself. It gave all of us great pleasure."

"I am very glad," responded Charley, in the same low tone.

"Excuse me, I didn't hear you —" Huntley bent his head close to Charley's face as he spoke.

"I said I was glad that they were pleased," shouted our hero.

At the same instant the other gave a strong pull at his cigar which flashed a momentary glare in Charley's face. After this there was a silence.

"It's no use, Charley," said Huntley, after the pause, in a tone intended to be kindly; "I have suspected you ever since the night you sang, and now I'm sure of you, though you are terribly altered. Why in the world did you not let us know? I fear you have been in distress on the voyage. Surely you must have known *me!*"

Charley was silent, stunned, and full of speechless wrath.

"Come!" cried Huntley, "I am waiting to shake hands; you don't dream of trying the disguise any longer, do you? We'll go below and have a toddy and a cigar, and talk over the hiatus. I'm all eagerness to hear the story of your adventures!" Still no response, and Huntley said quietly, "I hope you have n't put me in your bad books, old fellow; I don't deserve that. Besides, I am going to be your cousin, Charley, and we must be friends —"

"You d—d infernal scoundrel!" yelled Charley, his cool blood rising to fever heat; "what do you mean?"

Huntley drew back slightly, but spoke quickly. "I might rather ask what *you* mean; *my* meaning is simply that I am going to marry your cousin, and —"

"*Never!*"

Huntley puffed his cigar coolly. Was it worth his time to waste words on this abandoned boy, who, very likely, was half drunk at that moment, on the rum of the forecastle?

"Why not?" he asked, shortly.

"For a hundred reasons!" cried Charley, who was clenching his fists in the dark. "Because you are a villain, and, as I suspect, a convicted one, and because you have a wife living!"

Huntley started violently, but recovered himself on the instant.

"You have evidently acquired some accomplishments in your gay career," he said with a cold sneer; "you were not so ready with a lie once."

Charley gave way under this, and struck at the man with all his strength. Huntley reeled under the blow, but closed with him like a tiger and forced him sharply against the boat's bow.

"Will you have done, you fool?" he cried, hoarsely.

Charley tore an arm loose, and, seizing the other by the throat, held him back for an instant. All the demon in his nature was aroused.

"I know you, Robert Delafield *alias* —"

At the name, Huntley gathered himself in a spasm of strength and fell on Charley with resistless force. Always powerful, he seemed to have redoubled might in his arms; and Charley, weakened by long illness, was a mere child in his grasp. In an instant Huntley had wrenched the hand from his neck and lifted the young man with one tremendous wrench from the deck. They were close at the rail; and without a spoken word the Englishman raised his victim and hurled him over. Charley clutched frantically at his opponent, and caught a momentary hold on his sleeve; shaken from this he clutched at the rail, but missed it, and went down the ship's side without a cry. The moon was entirely obscured and the steamer shrouded in darkness as Huntley bent over and strained eye and ear for a last sign of his victim. There was none; nothing but the inky darkness, the rush of the water through which the ship was ploughing at high speed, and the dim wake of white foam behind, along which he ran his gaze until it was lost in the blackness. He drew a long, hard breath and wiped the moisture from his forehead, where a great lump had risen yet unnoticed.

"Not a sound!" he muttered; "the screw must have crushed him on the instant. He will not come back again this time!"

He went away quickly from the spot. Even in his hardened heart the consciousness of his fearful deed began already to breed its nameless terrors, and he hurried from that vast and awful presence where an accusing voice seemed to arise in every wave. As he passed the officer at the binnacle, the latter said, "Good evening," and asked if "Mr. Thompson" was not "over there aft"?

Huntley shivered, but replied calmly, "I think not: I saw no one."

"Ah!" was the dry rejoinder. The sailor's practised eye rarely deceived him, and he had seen the two figures by the cutter in a flash of moonlight just before. He waited

till Huntley's head disappeared down the companion stairs, and, whistling shrilly to "keep her on," moved aft to the boat's side. His foot struck something, and he picked up "Mr. Thompson's" large hat lying just by the rail, and felt it still warm at the band. He gave a low whistle, this time with his lips, and cast his eyes about sharply over the deck; then he stepped to the rail and peered over. Any one but an iron-nerved sailor would have shrunk back appalled from the dark mass that met his eyes clinging to the side of the ship, struggling upwards. But he dropped instantly on the deck, and, throwing his right arm around the pillar of the rail next the space occupied by the boat, he forced his shoulders through the narrow gap and reached downward with his wiry left arm.

His hand encountered a coat-collar, into which his strong fingers twisted themselves.

"Courage, lad! hook an arm in mine!"

Charley obeyed convulsively, with a gasping "Thank God!" He was very nearly spent in the struggle.

The officer drew him up with one strong pull to the level of the deck; and, raising himself to his knees, which he braced, one against the boat and the other upon the pillar, put out his other hand and dragged his burden easily, though a little roughly, through the opening to the deck. Charley rolled himself into a sitting posture, and, leaning back on the boat, panted for breath. The officer rose to his feet, and, wiping the perspiration from his face with a square yard of bandanna, gave vent to a half-smothered oath.

Charley, not yet able to speak, grasped his leg as if entreating him not to go.

"All right, lad, I 'm not going. Get your wind, get your wind! By the Apostles, it was a close squeak. I can't see what you caught."

"It was the line," said Charley, between his short breaths; "there 's a stringer loose there. It caught *me*, rather; I went over the roll, and it was flying well out. Luckily it was a loop; I got a little rest with my foot in it, but I got som stiff bumps too. It *was* close; it kept bumping my breath out. I should n't have got up without you; and I was just going to slide down again and raise an alarm. It 's Curtis, is n't it?"

"Yes, but, I say, how did it come about?"

Charley's wits came back with his "wind."

"Wait a minute. Ah! that 's my hat. Don't say anything about it, please, Curtis; at least, not just yet. How long do you lay over at New York?"

"A week, probably. Come over to the binnacle; I see they are letting her fall off. We can talk there."

Charley walked unsteadily, and was glad to rest on the skylight while Curtis called a quartermaster.

"Go down and tell the steward to bring up a glass of brandy: look sharp!"

The liquor brought the young man around.

"I think I will go below," he said. "I will see you in the morning, Curtis. You won't say anything, will you?"

"As you like; keep clear of the long shark, you know."

Charley stopped and thought. "How much did you see, Curtis?" he asked.

"I saw enough," was the sententious reply; "we 'll talk about it in the morning."

Charley went to his berth, but it was long before he slept. The events of the night all seemed strangely unreal, except the wild moment when he had hung between life and death: that was terribly real, and the memory of it came with every third thought. And Huntley — He grew fairly cold, and his teeth closed hard, as he thought of him; at that moment he could have seen him tossed without mercy into the same dark sea, and felt a grim satisfaction in his tombless burial. He fell into an uneasy sleep at last, broken with terrifying dreams and painful awakenings, until exhaustion and deep slumber followed.

When he woke it was with a dim consciousness that a long time had elapsed. The ship was motionless, and the unfamiliar "Yo-heave-ho!" of the stevedore's gangs, the tramp of many feet, and the broken rattle of the donkey-engine, fell on his glad ears. Through the open port he caught a glimpse of a far-stretching forest of masts and a patch of blue summer sky, — the sky of his native land.

Though his watch told him it was noon, he lingered still a little while in his berth, busy with his thronging thoughts.

CHAPTER XX.

EXIT HUNTLEY.

At the time treated of in these chapters the writer was a respectable resident of the city of New York. I may be permitted the qualifying word, I trust, which, while it sounds rather well, means nothing whatever, and can scarcely be regarded an expression of egotism. I rented and occupied a modest suite of offices — two, and a wash-cupboard — in an aerial locality just within the saving atmosphere of the City Hall, and was popularly supposed to be engaged in the practice of the legal profession. There was a certain warrant for the supposition to be found in an unpretentious bit of tin in the mosaic of signs and symbols on the door-posts below, on which, "*Ego*, Attorney at Law," met the

public eye in simple text, with the supplementary information that the said gentleman was not to be found on any floor inferior to the classic fourth. My "business hours" were from ten to three; my hours of business are quite another matter, of which it is not here necessary to speak.

I was alone in my outer office on a certain day in July, 186–, the same on which at an earlier hour the steamer ——, of the Guion line, had come to moorings in the savory vicinage of Desbrosses Street. As the perusal of the shipping list in no way entered into my habits at that time, I was probably unaware of this maritime fact; certainly I was far from suspecting that it possessed any possible interest for me, being, as I distinctly remember, deeply engrossed at the moment in a case of small dimensions but sufficiently perplexing nature, wherein an irate landlady of a "quiet locality," and an obtuse neighbor of questionable character, were the parties litigant. I had, as I further remember, almost exhausted the field of expedients and my own temper in the study of the momentous problem, and felt a growing consciousness that lunch-time was fully arrived, when the door opened suddenly and there entered unto me a gentleman. The first glance at the stranger's *ensemble* was inspiring; I was refreshed, indeed, by his very foreign and really unique appearance. The exceptional is always attractive, and never more so, perhaps, than in a lawyer's office, where it is dimly suggestive of something out of the common in the way of causes and cases, fees and charges.

I salamed the visitor, and placed a chair, which courtesies he gracefully ignored; he removed an avalanche of hat, and, coming up to me, administered a vigorous slap on my back.

"So you don't know me, either! Egad! I might as well be Rip Van Winkle! How are you, Harry? My name — "

"Is wonder! I'd never have known you, Charley; but I'm awfully glad to see you, all the same. From what heathen possession do you come?"

"No worse than England. But how are you and everybody and the babies?"

The young man's exuberance *was* trying, with the mercury at 85°.

"I am well; 'everybody' is always well, I believe; as for the babies, Charles! for what do you take me? Why am I thus — "

"Sinner! I had hoped you were reformed; bachelorhood and its sinful indulgences still keep their hold on you. Speaking of indulgences, have you lunched?"

"I was just going; will you join me?"

"You anticipate me; now that I think of it, I have fasted since last evening. I have a queer story to tell you, Harry, and work for you also, — work that must be done quickly. Can you give me a day or two of your time?"

"Only too glad; but since you are fasting, let's go across to Del's at once; the fatted calves will be all served before the tardy prodigal arrives."

I need not have used the word; it slipped out in the usual way when one is trying to be "funny"!

"Do you see my father, Harry? Is he well?" he asked just afterwards, as we were crossing the Park.

"You have n't seen — ? O, he is as usual, I think; I saw him at the office a few days since."

"A strange question, was n't it?" said Charley, smiling. "I've enough that 's strange to tell you."

As we went in at the familiar Chambers Street portal, he asked, "Do you remember the last night I saw you at the Mayflower, when I had just come up town with Dick Huntley, after dining here?"

"Yes, very well; we were all very much cut up by your sudden taking off. By the way, where is Huntley? I suppose you met him abroad."

My information respecting Charley was that of the gossips, and I hesitated to ask several questions which arose in my mind. I thought this a safe one.

"He is here in New York; we arrived by the same steamer, though by no fault of his, *Dieu sait!* Thereby hangs my tale."

We were a long time over our luncheon; Quill, who is my office-boy, clerk, and copyist, and who awaits my return according to regulations before running down to Gould's for his frugal bowl of clam soup, evinced an amount of feeling I had never before observed in him when our return to the office relieved his watch. Charley told me a part of his story over our wine, and completed the narrative in my sanctum. I need not repeat any of the details, which are already known to the reader; he stated them to me minutely; and more clearly than he, perhaps, I traced the guiding hand from the gambling-house to the very end. The deep game was worthy of Huntley, and murder in a terrible form its fitting climax.

"Now," said Charley, at the close of the recital, lighting his fifth cigar with a certain satisfaction, "what is to be done? I leave it to you entirely; but let it be done speedily; ''t were well 't were done quickly!'"

"'There would have been a time for such a word, to-morrow,'" I retorted; "we need not be driven; the fact that he believes you in the Atlantic will prevent him from pushing matters."

"But I dread every instant's delay! I can't bear to think he is here, free, and near my cousin."

I smiled in secret at the soft emphasis on "cousin," but made no sign.

"Well, if I understand you, you don't wish to go at him in legal form."

"No, not if we can avoid it; anything but publicity."

I reflected a moment, and not without a little pang of regret; to have sent him to Sing Sing for life, this villain of the *premier ordre*, in a blazing speech to the bench!

"Do you want to see the man?" I asked Charley.

"No, indeed! that is, I am indifferent; as you elect."

"We can warn him off; show him our hand, and give him three, five, or seven days to leave the country, and see that he does it, and all without seeing him."

Charley pondered, and was evidently unsatisfied.

"It 's letting him off with nothing; besides, I want in some way to be able to show up the facts to my father, and, if necessary, to — to the others."

"Then it 's a confession signed and witnessed; not an easy thing to manage, if I know the man."

"We must try it. Put it squarely to him, — that or arraignment. He does n't know that Curtis saw the affair."

"Or that you are alive, for that matter. I think we might cow him by a combination. Curtis will help us?"

"The good fellow will do anything; he promised it, in the name of all the Apostles!"

"Good! now the details."

These were very simple; I wrote two notes, one to Curtis on the steamer, and another to a man of my choice at the Detective Agency.

The afternoon was spent, and we went up town together to my quarters, which Charley agreed to share for the present. We dined later in an obscure corner at the Hoffman, and in the evening I accompanied him in a walk up the Avenue, readily divining the impulse which led his steps in that direction. As we were passing his father's house, a figure appeared in the doorway. Before I could breathe a caution, Charley sprang up two steps and called in a low voice; "Stephen!"

The old man stood mute a moment, and then came down the steps like a boy of ten.

"Mr. Charles!"

"'Sh! It 's I, sure enough, bless your old heart! I shall be home again in a few days, and you must not speak of seeing me. Has — has Mr. Huntley been here yet, Stephen?"

"No, sir; he arrived in the steamer with the ladies, but did not come to the house. He is expected this evening, I think, sir."

"Listen, Stephen; if he comes he must not be admitted. Tell him Miss Emma is unwell; anything, but make some excuse and keep him out."

"But, Mr. Charles — "

"Never mind, I will take the entire responsibility, and you need have no fear. You can trust me, can't you, Stephen?"

"You know I would do that, Mr. Charles."

"On no account admit him. I must go now; I shall come home to stay very soon."

"God bless you, sir, I hope so; we have grown old without you, Mr. Charles." The faithful old fellow's voice was tremulous as he spoke. Charley paused at the words.

"My father is well?"

"About as usual, sir; he 's not so strong as he was. You are well, I hope, sir."

"Quite; not a word, mind, and remember about — "

"I won't fail, Mr. Charles."

Charley was exultant as we walked on. "You can't think what a relief it is!" he said; "it was horrible to think of that wretch being admitted there again. Old Stephen is as good as gold; Huntley will not get in there to-night, you may be sure."

"Nor to-morrow," I responded, sharing something of his feeling.

"O that 'to-morrow'! I ache for it!"

It would come soon enough, as all to-morrows do, despite the maxims; and I confessed to a rather disagreeable foretaste of its task in my mind, though I gave the feeling no words in the long evening of pleasant talk which we enjoyed amid the chaste surroundings of Cœlebs' chambers. So much tobacco-smoke and such unconscionable hours, I may honestly aver, were strictly exceptional under my modest roof-tree.

Huntley was not a little nonplussed, when he arrived at the house on the Avenue, to be informed by Stephen, with much nervous and rather extravagant politeness, that Miss Howland was "much fatigued, and begged to be excused," and that Mr. Wales had "just stepped out on unavoidable business, and left his regrets." He went away in a bad humor, asking himself angrily if it was usual for young ladies to "excuse" themselves to their *fiancés*, or for sober bankers to appoint evening interviews, as Mr. Wales had done that day, at the office, and be absent on "business" when the hour arrived. In other days he would have insisted upon the absurdity of such anomalies, and poor old Stephen's little fraud would have fallen through, it is to be feared; but the broker had no heart this night to assert his opinions or his rights. He had borne himself bravely all the day, had seen the ladies ashore and in their carriage, with a smiling promise to call in the evening, and covered with a witticism the bruise on his temple that the "boom" had given him. Then in a round of business calls, reports

of his successful transactions abroad to divers financial potentates, and a rapid running over of the books in his own office, he so carried himself as to win the commendation of all with whom he came in contact.

But with the shadows of night arose the demon of unrest. Thrown back upon himself, with all his thoughts massed in one horrible memory, the struggle for control became an unequal combat, an agony. He had even feared to make the visit at the Wales mansion, called himself a fool afterwards, and, braced by a deep draught of brandy, started boldly for the house.

"It will wear off," he muttered.

Coming down the steps after hearing Stephen's messages, he glanced across the way, and noted signs of life and gayety in Mrs. Jennings's lighted parlors. He felt tempted to enter there, but some counter-impulse prevailed, and he kept on down the street. His uneasy feet wandered to Worthington's, but he found the house empty of people, with only a few lazy servants about, who vexed him with curious looks and fawning attentions; the master himself was out of town, with the world. He stretched himself in the private room above and drank furiously; but the solitude maddened him, and he went out soon again into the streets. Then he strayed in at Wallack's; the play was "The Colleen Bawn," and he came into the lobby at the moment of the drowning scene, which he watched with fascinated eyes. Some acquaintances found him out and drove him wild with questions. One noticed the contusion on his forehead.

"It 's the mark of Cain," he said, with a bitter laugh, and went out.

"By Jove! one might almost believe it!" said the questioner, recalling the man's face.

He wandered for hours with aimless but vigorous steps, drinking recklessly and ignorant of his whereabouts, until some congenial instinct led him into the glittering haunts of vice of the West side. Here, as the central figure of wild and horrible revels, invoked by his open purse, he experienced a momentary distraction.

Long after midnight he found himself at a far corner of Broadway, overcome with weariness, but with the same awful unrest in his brain; it had worn out the body and raged still with unabated force. He took a hack to his lodgings. "I *must* sleep," he said; "but how?"

He got out at Union Square, and under the light of a lamp on a blank page torn from a letter wrote a prescription in technical terms, signing it with illegible initials. The sleepy clerk at Hegeman's did not recognize the writing or letters, but the appearance of the applicant was satisfactory, and the mixture only a powerful sedative.

"I wish it immediately; the patient is in great pain," said Huntley.

It was prepared and given to him, and he rode to his rooms. Here he lighted a blaze of gas, and, taking the opiate at a swallow, threw himself half dressed on his bed. The effect of the potion was like that of a gas, — it spent itself in thirty minutes, leaving him worse than before. He bounded out of bed. "Fool! never to have thought of it!" He went to his secretary and from a drawer produced a *bijou* medicine-chest. Out of this he chose a small vial, and a tiny injector with a tube like a needle, and with these returning to his bed he sat down upon the edge. Then he bared his left arm, — even in his semi-delirium his hand was steady as steel, — and filling the miniature instrument from the bottle he drove the point through a prominent vein, and forced the fluid into the wound. Quickly placing the things on his bed-stand, he rolled over upon the couch, and in a moment was sunk in slumber, deep and dreamless as death itself.

I sent a note to Mr. Huntley at the office of Huntley & Co. the following morning, begging that he would call at my office at three o'clock that day, "on a matter of the first importance to himself, R. S. V. P." He had not yet come down town when it was delivered, but at noon I received a line from him, saying that he would come at the hour appointed, or as soon afterwards as possible.

He came very promptly, and greeted me with his customary easy grace, a slight club-acquaintance having subsisted between us; but I was struck by the alteration in his face, which had lost something of its iron rigidity, and its usual pallor had become lividness.

"Ah! how are you?" he said. "I am prompt, am I not? although I come in fear and trembling, as becomes one who enters into the august presence of Justice. What is it, Meegs? I half suspect, you know. Some of my clerks in my absence — ?"

There was a vague uneasiness, almost a dread, expressed in his face and tone that gave me a chill. I had never before met murder face to face, and I shrank a little at the contact. "Sit down, Mr. Huntley," I said, giving him a seat somewhat in the rear of my large writing-table; "it is a sufficiently serious affair."

He sat down silently, and at the same moment I gave a short cough. The door of the inner room opened at the sound, and the officer Curtis came in, followed by Charley in the same dress he had worn on the steamer. Can a man be frightened to death?

They find unwounded corpses on battle-fields, I have read; and I believe this man's terror, intensified as it was by the reactionary effect of opium, held him for an instant at death's door.

He rose up, overturning his chair, and reeled against the wall, upon which he seemed to flatten himself, and at which his spread fingers clutched on either side. His jaw fell, and the protruding eyes were fixed like those of a maniac. I could not see that he breathed. It was horrible!

Curtis broke the spell with a smothered exclamation, and I readjusted the chair.

"Sit down, Mr. Huntley," I said, with such *sangfroid* as I could assume; "as the interview is not likely to be a pleasant one, it is the desire of Mr. Wales to make it as brief as possible." I used the name in order to impress him with the reality of the situation, and the words called the man back to life. He sank into the seat with a shuddering groan, and put his hand mechanically to his head. I could well imagine that the first definable feeling which succeeded the shock was one of immeasurable relief, and I feared the strength he might gather from it. I hastened to secure the benefit of the moment. "I need scarcely enter into any explanation of the circumstances which have led to this meeting, Mr. Huntley. They have been fully discussed by Mr. Wales and myself, and he has chosen to offer you conditions which reach the limits of leniency."

I paused and fumbled diplomatically in my folio. He did not speak immediately; he had leaned on the table and got a small paper-cutter in his hands, which he turned and twisted with his fingers. His face was settling down again into something of its wonted firmness; but his forehead was dank, and the dark hair seemed to cling upon it as he bent his head without meeting our gaze. Charley, I saw, avoided looking at him; but Curtis watched him closely with his gray eyes in sober curiosity.

"What do you want of me?" he asked at last, huskily.

"Mr. Wales offers you liberty and freedom from prosecution, demanding simply that you shall sign this paper, and then — But will you read it?" I held it out to him, but he looked at it without taking it.

"What does it say?" he asked in a tone of confidence that rather startled me.

"It is a brief statement covering three principal charges: first, that on a certain evening, eighteen months ago, you influenced Mr. Wales to go with you to a gambling-house in this city, where you were accessory to the unlawful use of a draft which you knew him to have in his possession."

"That is absurd!"

I read on without heeding the words: "Secondly, that, having a wife and two children living in England, as we are abundantly able to prove, you have sought, under an assumed name and character, to contract a marriage with Mr. Wales's cousin." I paused here, but he remained silent, and I read the last count. "Thirdly and lastly, that on the night of July 1, being at sea on the steamer —"

"I was attacked by the said Mr. Wales, and in the struggle which ensued he fell overboard, or something like, is it not?"

The burst was startling. There was only one way to deal with him, and I saw Charley had fired up at the man's bravado.

"It is useless to waste words, Mr. Huntley. Understand our position; either you must sign this paper in presence of witnesses, which means here and now, or go from this office to prison, to await trial for attempted murder."

A flush stole over his face at the words, but he did not immediately answer.

"This is the sole condition?" he asked.

"I have omitted to add that you must leave the country at once, though it is rather a consequence than a condition."

He was revolving every possible chance, I could see, and asking questions to gain time.

"Men are not commonly asked to sign a self-convicting paper in your courts, — are they, Mr. Meegs?"

"We are not in the courts, Mr. Huntley, fortunately for you. Men in your position, you may say, rather, are rarely offered such an opportunity to escape the just punishment of their crimes."

"Why do you let him go?" asked Curtis, abruptly, and to my great surprise. I found no words for immediate reply, and made none, as I saw at once that the diversion had its effect on Huntley. He glanced at the sailor, and winced under the man's steady eyes.

"If I sign this," he said, hurriedly, "I presume I am free to follow the final condition in my own way and time."

"Not entirely. To-day is Wednesday; there will be a steamer on Saturday, and it is expected, I may say required, that you will take passage in it. In that event it is agreed that no use will be made of this document outside of Mr. Wales's family. In the mean time, I may add, you will be subject to a certain surveillance which will not in any way interfere with your ordinary pursuit of business."

"Precisely!" he said with a sneer; "it's a-d—d fine programme!"

Curtis moved uneasily in his chair, and I hastened to speak.

"There is an end to patience; accept or

refuse. We are wasting time and grace on you."

I called Quill, and he ushered in a second patient gentleman, who bowed, but remained aloof by the door. Huntley noted him with a quick glance. He hesitated still a moment, with a simply reckless impulse to fight to the last; but some other thought decided him, and, seizing a pen, he signed the confession boldly.

"Accepted under protest, gentlemen, and not so much because I fear your ability to prove the pretty lies, as because of the law's delays, which I know you are so capable of employing." He even laughed while Curtis and myself signed the paper as witnesses. "It is to be hoped you will severally enjoy the recompense of your kindly offices. Egad! it 's like the 'butcher, the baker, and candlestick-maker'! Working thus in a trio, you will allow me to say you make a 'whole team'! I suppose I may go?"

"Of course — only — Mr. Fergusen, Mr. Huntley. Mr. Fergusen will in no way inconvenience you; probably you will not come into contact at all, but it is well you should know him, perhaps, to avoid mistakes."

"Your considerateness overwhelms me. In the language of the journals, Mr. Meegs, you are an ornament to your profession. Gentlemen, I have the honor — "

Charley stepped up to him at the last moment.

"Richard Huntley, or Robert Delafield, is it possible that anything I might say could move your heart for the poor woman and children who belong to you?"

The Englishman glared at the speaker for an instant with such an expression of hate as I have never seen equalled in a human face. Then he spoke five words, — the reader may thank me for not printing them here, — and, turning on his heel, went out, followed by the detective.

Curtis wiped his head with the bandanna, while Charley brought out some cigars.

"Nice lad, that," said the officer; "he 'minds me of a Spanish captain we caught on the slave-coast, when I was a boy in the navy. I did n't quite understand your trade, but I hope you are quits with him."

There was a rare good dinner served "for three" at Delmonico's presently, during which the sturdy old sailor warmed into a flow of reminiscences and good-nature. We saw him aboard, later; and when he sailed again that day week he was richer in worldly goods by a handsome chronometer timepiece from Tiffany's, with his own and the donor's name in honorable association graven therein. As long as his precarious life is spared, Charley Wales has a brave friend in John Curtis.

Charley left me at my rooms in the evening.

"I must try to see my father to-night: I can't wait."

"As you think best, though I don't think you need fear anything more from Huntley in that quarter. I fancy the Avenue will not see him again."

Nor did it. On some business plea covering designs best known to himself he left town the next day, and I received a despatch from Fergusen in the evening from Newark, in which salubrious city the broker had sought seclusion. Saturday arrived, and I looked anxiously for the detective during the afternoon. He came in at last, and took the offered chair like a tired man.

"The bird is gone, eh?" I asked, quickly.

"Off, sure enough, and seemed glad to go. You don't think he 'll be much missed down there in Wall Street?"

The tone was inquiring.

"I fancy not, he has been out of general business almost entirely for some time."

"Perhaps you 're right. I did n't know; he was wonderful shy the last morning in the street. Thank you; it 's liberal. My respects to Mr. Wales. Good day, sir."

Did they "miss" him? It was not known, and Wall Street keeps its secrets well. The world wondered for a day or two; somebody seized the books, too, when it was known that the man was gone for good and all; but there were no "developments," and in that mart of gold what is man that he should be remembered?

CHAPTER XXI.

A ROSE IS CRUSHED.

With the connivance of Stephen, Charley made his way unobserved in the evening to the library of the house in the Avenue, where his father sat alone over the night's journals. The old servitor had said that Mr. Wales was not so strong as he had been; but it was not yet known to Charley that some months before the banker had been prostrated with severe and dangerous illness. I had omitted to speak of it to him, supposing, indeed, that he must have known it; but, as the reader is aware, he did not, and was consequently unprepared for the great change in his father's appearance.

Time and incessant toil had broken the man of iron at last; it was the first actual sickness of his life, and brought with it the first realizing sense that Nature, tried and disdained, brooks no plea of "business" nor yields to any force of will in the execution of her laws and the infliction of her punishments. She had been kind, cruelly kind,

to him, and borne the long subordination well; but when the avenging stroke fell it was merciless and terrible, and he rallied from it only to find weakness and weariness in the place of his former strength, — a strong shackle on hip and limb never again to be loosened. He was compelled to modify his habits, but he resented savagely the advice of his physician to retire from active business. He would cling to the last to some mimicry of the old life, and in his bitterness struggle to the very end against the conviction of powers impaired and duties defied. It is an every-day picture of the working-day world, this soulless slavery of age, this cringing bondage of the graybeard to the idols of his prime. His all is this little concomitant of existence "stamped in gold." Life has no other meaning for him: what to him must be the meaning of death?

It may be that other and different feelings came to the banker with the sense of weakness and the dread realization of physical decay, awakening the cravings of age and rendering the old chosen isolation oppressive. Certain it is that he welcomed the return of his niece with marked pleasure, and Emma's pain in finding him so broken was mitigated by gratification at his unusual display of feeling.

Charley was shocked and saddened by the striking change that had come upon his father. He advanced with a faltering heart, as Stephen withdrew, closing the door softly behind him; and Mr. Wales's face assumed a puzzled and rather dissatisfied expression as the young man paused by his chair with his hat in his hand. The father failed to recognize his son.

"You do not know me, father: it is Charley," said the poor boy; and it required a strong effort to nerve the trembling lips even for those few words. He had studied, too, what he was to say, but now when the time for utterance had come the words failed him.

The banker started, and seemed about to rise, but he did not do so, nor did he give his hand to his son. After one sharp, recognizing look at Charley's face, he withdrew his eyes and fixed them on vacancy; he was evidently trying to mould his features into the old rigid lines. It was not altogether a surprise; he had reasoned, as he thought, infallibly, that just such an event would occur sooner or later, just such a return of the prodigal when the last resource had been exhausted, and the wayward spirit humbled with suffering and want. He had made the contingency a study at times, more frequently of late, and, crushing some faint impulses which stirred his heart, had resolved to be just in his actions above all questions of affection; and leniency had no conspicuous place in Mr. Wales's ideas of justice. He intended so to act now, though for an instant he had been startled into softer feelings by Charley's appearance; he had not reckoned on so early a *dénouement*. He remained quite silent, collecting his thoughts, and Charley got a little self-possession in the pause.

"I am sorry, father, if my presence is unwelcome to you. I did not come on my own account, — at least not entirely; I had no longer any right to do that, as I am fully aware. I cannot explain things in any way so well as this paper will do it, and you would rather read it than hear my words, perhaps; will you look at it, please?"

Charley produced and extended to his father the confession of Richard Huntley. The banker had looked up rather curiously, and received it mechanically from his hands. He was not pleased with this feature of the interview; he believed it to be some small piece of charlatanry, and it was very bitter for him to think his son had descended to such a method of gaining favor. Without opening the paper, he asked, coldly, "What is this?"

"It is the witnessed acknowledgment of a villain who has deceived and injured all of us, father. I hope it will not pain you too greatly: the man is Richard Huntley."

It was a little strange that conviction of their truth went straight to the banker's heart with these words; he had never formed any defined suspicion of Huntley, but his earliest judgment of the man had never changed, and it had never been wholly favorable to him. In his business connections with Wales, Burton, & Co., Mr. Huntley never found himself in a position of entirely unguarded trust; he had noted the fact often enough, but ascribed it readily to the well-known cautious policy of the house. Mr. Wales accepted human nature *en masse* with reservations; he accepted Huntley with an additional allowance, for which there is no ready word of description.

There was not a shadow of feeling in the banker's face, however, as he proceeded deliberately to open the document. He said simply, "I trust you do not make such an extraordinary statement unadvisedly." Charley remained standing, and watched his father with a beating heart, as he read down the sheet. Mr. Wales first glanced at the signatures, and then passed slowly and carefully over the first allegation, reading it twice, but with a still implacable face. He looked up after it, however, and said quietly, "Won't you sit down?"

The young man murmured, "Thank you," and sat down humbly enough. After the second clause the banker wrinkled his brows, and Charley, watching him covertly, was glad to see some evidence of feeling.

"You know this to be true?" he asked sharply; he did not specify the charge, but Charley had followed his eyes down the page, and knew which he meant.

"I lived more than a month in his wife's house in England," he replied.

"You might have been deceived."

"You forget, father: he confesses the charge. Even if he had not, it could be proved beyond question."

Mr. Wales moved uneasily in his chair and looked up quickly as he read the last charge. "He tried to take your life?"

"It was partly my fault. I labored hard to avoid him on the ship, but he recognized me finally. We had some words and I — I struck him; he threw me over the ship's side, and I was saved by the merest chance."

The banker drew a long, painful breath, and remained silent and thoughtful for some moments.

"What have you done?" he asked.

"There seemed to be only one thing to do and avoid publicity. We got him to sign the paper, and he is to leave the country immediately." Afterwards, at his father's request, Charley described more minutely the struggle on the ship and the interview at my office; at the end he said, "This will be very painful for my cousin; would it not be best to engage Mrs. Jennings to tell her?"

"Yes; I think so," replied Mr. Wales.

There was silence after this, and something like perplexity in the banker's mind, occasioned by the unexpected developments. Gentler impulses were struggling for predominance, but the old man's stubborn prejudice died hard.

"Where are you staying?" he asked at last, and rather abruptly.

"With Mr. Meegs at his rooms for the present."

"Have you any plans?"

Charley could not determine whether the tone was kindly or not, but he bore up bravely.

"I have no settled plans," he said; "this matter has completely absorbed my thoughts. I had an idea, however, of going West and finding something to do. I have still something left," he added with a flushed face, "and I might make my way there in some business."

"It is not a bad project," said his father, more kindly; "the best, perhaps. Meantime you had better come home."

Charley's heart was in his throat at the words. Before he could speak Mr. Wales asked, "You will see Mrs. Jennings?"

"Yes, at once; to-night, if I am not too late."

"It would be as well, certainly."

Charley got up to go, and his father rose at the same time, but in an absent way. Charley was obliged to ask him for the paper, which he retained in his hand.

"I ought to show it to Mrs. Jennings, or, at least, be provided with it, that I may do so, if necessary. I shall not see you again sir, to-night. You said — you think I should come home?"

"Of course; there will be time enough to arrange your plans afterwards."

"Then I will come to-morrow and be very happy to do so. I thank you for the privilege, father. Good night!"

He put out his hand timidly; but Mr. Wales took it and held it a moment, while he looked at the young man fully for the first time and noted his thin face.

"Good night, my son," he said soberly, yet kindly; "you have found experience a hard teacher, have you not?"

"I have indeed, sir; I hope the lesson will be a useful one."

"I trust it may. Good night. I shall not mention to your cousin that you are here."

Charley went out as he had come in, seeing no one but Stephen; but a light hand was running softly and rather sadly over the piano keys, as he passed the parlor doors, and his heart bounded at the sounds.

"You are coming back, Mr. Charles?" asked the servant anxiously at the door.

"To-morrow, Stephen, to-morrow, you good old soul!"

His heart was in the skies as he ran across the street. There was a blaze of light and a rattle of merry voices in the drawing-rooms, but he hardly noticed them particularly.

"Will you tell Mrs. Jennings that an old friend wishes to see her in private for five minutes?" he said to a bewildered domestic, who subsequently declared that "his voice struck her all of a heap, it did, but she 'd never 'a' known it was Mr. Charles."

Mrs. Jennings, coming into the library, was unspeakably astonished and a little dismayed to see the singer of the ship standing therein, and could not restrain a momentary impulse to call back the servant. Charley's quick words checked her, "Don't be alarmed, Mamma Jennings; it 's only poor me, — Charley Wales!"

"Bless my soul! you poor boy!" It was all she could say. Tears were in her eyes and in her throat, and only a woman's overflowing pity in her heart sweeping away all other thoughts. She went up to him and took the bearded face into her two hands to see it better, and the smiling eyes reassured her. She kissed him lightly on the brow, and then gave way to a little burst of tears that prevented all speech for the moment.

Charley made her sit down.

"I bring you a very painful revelation, but it must be made without delay. We

have all been terribly deceived, mamma!"

Mrs. Jennings's emotions on hearing of Huntley's duplicity (for Charley told her but half) all took the form of sympathy for Emma.

"The poor child! what an escape for her! It will be very bitter for her, though I'm not sure — I am glad you are here, glad *you* are the deliverer. You have been a great scamp, Mr. Charles! Of course you have seen your father."

"He was very good to me; I am going back home to-morrow."

"You have n't seen Emma, then?"

"No, I must not; I do not want to see her until she knows all."

"To be sure, Mr. Wisdom! And that was you all the time on the steamer? How strange it is! The wretch is going; we shall not have to see him again?"

"Never, I trust."

"I can't realize it! It 's just like a dream, and I sha' n't sleep a wink after it. Poor Em! she must know it at once!"

"You will tell her gently; do you think she — she will find it *very* hard?"

The wise woman smiled wickedly at him, despite her perplexity.

"I can't tell, I hope not; only, you must — There! let me think about it."

"I leave it all to you; only I *must* go home to-morrow, and I want to see my cousin," said he, plaintively.

"So he shall," laughed the lady, "though he does n't half deserve it. I ought not to say that, however, since you have saved her from what I can't bear to think of. You are lucky to have so well atoned, sir! There, I 'm talking nonsense. I 'll see Emma in the morning; I must think about it."

"You won't say anything about the ship singer?" said Charley, rising, and with ill-disguised anxiety.

"It does n't seem necessary; but she must know you are here."

"I think not; father will not tell her yet, and Stephen is bound with oaths. *Don't* tell her, please."

"Ah, I see! Well, I won't, though I may tell her who found the villain out."

"If you like; it won't matter. I shall see her in the afternoon. I will go now. Good night."

Half-way to the door he turned to her again and fixed a hungry, beseeching look on her face.

"Mamma Jennings, *you* know! Will you tell me something?"

"That depends, young man!"

"Does Emma — Has she loved *him* very much?"

The temptation to punish him was strong, but there was no resisting the appeal of that young face!

"Emma never loved any one but a naughty fellow who did n't deserve —"

The sentence did not reach a conclusion. The two lithe arms went around the mamma's neck, and a profusion of whiskers obstructed speech and vision for a moment; and in the next the gentleman-passenger of the steerage went out with flying coat-tails at the door.

"How happy they will be!" said the good woman, exultantly; "and to think of that wretch! He *did* send the paper, after all! You are only a blind old woman, Susan Jennings!"

The "mamma" went unannounced, next morning, to Emma's own room, and caught that young woman dreaming over some written papers that she hid hastily as her visitor entered. Mrs. Jennings did not fail to notice the troubled face, upon which something of the old look of suffering had come back; but it gave her no great pain or uneasiness now. She felt tolerably sure of the case; her quick perception told her that the old love had struggled into power again among the old associations, and she guessed shrewdly at the condition of feeling in which Emma had fallen; but she guessed only half of the truth.

"I came to look after you, you truant!" she cried, gayly; "here are two evenings gone, and we have not had a glimpse of you. All the world has been calling, or I should have come sooner."

"I know," said Emma, embarrassed. "I was expecting Mr. Huntley all the time, and could not go out. He has not been here at all since we arrived. I don't know — I suppose we ought to send and inquire about him; had we not? I asked uncle last night, but he did not seem to think it necessary. Yet he may be ill."

"Your uncle is generally right, dear; don't fret about it. Come here and sit down by me; there, like that. It 's a long time, is n't it, since you and the old lady have had a good, old-fashioned chat together?"

Emma had come rather wearily yet gladly to the old place by the mamma's knee, and crouched there silently, not meeting her eyes. Her face was hidden from Mrs. Jennings; but could that lady have seen it, the look of mingled fear and expectation upon it might have surprised her. As it was, she wound her arm about the bent neck and spoke tenderly.

"I am going to ask you a strange question, puss. You must n't be frightened. Would you care very, so *very* much if you *never* saw Mr. Huntley again?"

Emma looked up quickly, faint with momentary terror; but the smiling eyes checked her first dreadful thought and left her in painful bewilderment.

"O mamma! what a question! I can't think what you mean!"

Was it worth while to delay the blow which Mrs. Jennings in her soul felt sure was no blow at all? She thought not.

"I mean simply that it is so; nothing in the least dreadful has happened to Mr. Huntley, but you never *will* see him again."

Startled and bewildered as she was, Emma could only comprehend the one great fact conveyed in the sober and convincing words; could only feel a great burden lifted from her, and a flood of exquisite feeling conquering all other thoughts, filling her heart and surging to her eyes. In these, raised a single instant to her own, Mrs. Jennings read nothing but gladness; and though the girl drooped against her shivering and sobbing hysterically, the lady had no disturbing fear.

When Emma grew calmer her friend told her carefully and tenderly the whole story, all that she herself knew; how this man, having a living wife and children, deserted in another land, had meditated such a cruel wrong to her, and would have succeeded but for a watchful eye and a brave heart that came in good time to save her.

Emma listened in sad, tearful silence to the end.

"How dreadful it all is!" she said in a low tone, adding, with sudden fear, "I shall not see him again, — shall I?"

"Never, darling. Do you know, I feel as if I ought to come in for a little blame, too —"

"O no, no; not you, mamma. You were always good, and never so good as now! But it is terrible!"

After that there was silence, but Emma was very calm; so much so that the good lady was rather nonplussed. She said at last, unable to check the womanly impulse, "And your deliverer, child; you do not even ask —"

The bright face raised so quickly to hers, crimson with happy and half-guilty blushes, and full of joy, stopped her eager tongue.

"*I know!*" was the low-spoken answer; and then the burning face was hid in the kindly bosom. But presently she lifted her head, and, drawing down the loved face, kissed it with rapid and breathless kisses.

"Bless me!" cried the mamma as soon as she recovered breath, "what a go-between I am! There, you odd thing! save them for some one else; they'll be claimed soon enough, I dare say! And you are mussing me dreadfully. I shall run away; I've got forty thousand things to do!"

"But, mamma —"

"Tut! let me go! I won't answer any more questions. I have done my errand, and now *my* occupation 's gone. We shall all be very happy now, and must never think again of our escape. There, go cool those burning cheeks. We shall look for you over this evening."

She got away with that, and left Emma alone with her thoughts. They were happy but tumultuous thoughts, for which there seemed to be no intelligible expression in her restless movements through the morning. Sometimes she sat down determinedly and tried to soothe them into rest, smiling and shuddering, and smiling again; but it would all end with a quick brushing away of obstinate, unbidden tears, and a precipitate abandonment of her seat. Then she tried to busy herself with a thousand little useless things, and went off in an absent dream over every one. Twenty times she went to her door and listened intently; and twenty times she came up to "Sultan" in his gilded cage, and watched him with unresponsive eyes as he beat his wings against the bars in a wild desire to reach the ripe, red lips. "Will he come to-day?" she whispered to the bird; and just as plainly as ever bird spoke, he chirped back, "Yes, he will come!"

At last when the lunch-bell rang, she went to her glass, and put a rose in her dress, a creamy June rose, tinged with the faintest pink, plucked from the bouquet on the mantel. It was only a pretext, after all, for looking at herself, and in no way could excuse the long thoughtful survey.

Yes, she was very lovely. For the first time in her life, perhaps, she allowed herself to accept, even dwell on, the truth; but now it made her glad. Then she went down stairs, and crossed the threshold of the breakfast-room bravely.

He *was* there, the tall, dark-bearded singer of the ship. There was no surprise in her face, nothing but great joy and timid, voiceless interrogation; but she stopped and trembled, and put out her hand to a chair.

He was at her side in an instant, and stood there irresolute, trembling like herself, but with all his soul in the great brown eyes. He did not touch her, but he spoke: "Emma, my darling!"

And then she fell on his breast and circled his neck with her quivering arms, hiding her face on his heart.

"O Charley!" and her eyes met his then, closer than ever before; "how I have longed for you!"

"My poor darling! yet I have been near you —"

"Yes, I knew it."

"You knew it?" He was startled.

She looked in his eyes with the warm, trusting look of a woman who gives all without the words.

"Did you think *I* would not know you? I did, from the very first moment on the ship."

"And you gave no sign!"

"Did I not? I was so unhappy! O Charley! I can't bear to think of it; but I trusted you!"

He gathered her closer with his strong arms.

"And loved me a little?" he asked.

"I have *always* loved you, when you did not know it; ever since I can remember!"

There could be but one answer to that, and he gave it; but one way to repeat the avowal without words, and that she adopted. Then they sat down like two people in a dream; and old Stephen, who, after a peep at them, had kept the gate like Horatius of old all this time against a discouraged domestic bearing a huge tray of steaming dishes, now let that functionary pass, and walked away to the vestibule, where he blew his nose excitedly, with much diffusion of bandanna, and made a half a dozen absurd and unnecessary rearrangements of the door-mat.

How beautiful she was to Charley's hungry eyes, as she busied herself at the little table, and made a parade of ministering to his wants who wanted nothing! How lovely the old-new face, now timid and blushing under his relentless eyes, now bold with love's boldness, and meeting his gaze with the conscious joy that comes but once in life!

How noble and wonderful *he* was! No one was ever half so good, so heroic, so tender, so brave, so admirable as he!

And what a love was theirs! Surely no two had ever so loved before.

The poor, crushed rose! she took it tenderly from her dress and gave it to him, when he begged for it, and seemed to want as well the hand that gave it; but it had come between their hearts, and been pressed out of all semblance of a rose; only the sweet, strong odor made it beautiful still, and in its martyrdom it had been sanctified. Happy the paths of those who have found a crushed rose somewhere on the weary way!

CHAPTER XXII.

WON AND LOST.

CHARLEY did not "go out West." Those far-away, industrious communities, whose names seem the synonymes of enterprise and success, will never rejoice in the accession to their population of that reconstructed and thoroughly estimable young man. For him the problem of the future was resolved in a glow of love's sunshine and by love's spirit hands in that morning hour whose events we have just described. Not that he, as my impulsive reader, being also young in heart, if not in years, may have imagined, — not that he and his true "ladye-love" were forthwith launched in a painted boat upon a painted sea, and amid the dazzling and sulphuric surroundings of a modern "transformation scene" wafted by scented breezes to some sweet, secluded, and mysterious bourne, following in the wake of Monte Cristo and the princess to slow music and an invisible chorus. The advantages of a scenic *dénouement* of that kind are undeniably very great, and to none more patent than the writer, — than to writers in general, I fancy, who must ever endure the pain of having the few last moments of their little comedies made chaotic by a rising audience and a shuffle of impatient feet towards the door. There is, indeed, something enlivening in the smoky, ending of a romance that sends the two happy ones away under full canvas to find and people Avalon; the process perpetuates their felicity, and they escape the rude after-touch of the vulgar practical by disappearing at once and forever from our eyes; beside such an attractive and inspiring conclusion the trite old *addendum* that "they were married and lived happily ever afterwards" becomes positively coarse, and retains no quality to recommend it beyond great convenience to the scribe. I confess a leaning to the poetical climax. I like the somewhat hackneyed, but ever-alluring idea of seclusion from the world, and the shared solitude of Byron's dream. I toss my hat to About's gallant Marquis, and his exquisite picture of a far island in a solitary sea, "upon that isle a single palm-tree with you (*la bien aimée*) at its foot, and at your feet — myself!"

But it is just possible that to our Charley the simple earthly — nay, vulgar, if you will — culmination was so entirely satisfactory as to leave no room for an unspoken desire. His first step was to make Emma promise to marry him in three months' time, a compact to which she subscribed with commendable resignation. Then he did what all the doctors had not been able to do, he got his father away from Wall Street, and forthwith transported the household down to a quiet corner of the New England beach, where they were joined by Mrs. Jennings and her family, and where the summer days sped to such joyous measures that even the slow blood of the worn-out banker warmed into new life.

I was permitted the happiness of joining the circle, and shared, for a brief season, something of the gladness that animated it. Through my life I shall carry the pleasant memory of that time, — of Charley and his constant kindness; of Miss Howland, whom

to know was to worship with almost religious reverence; of Clare, whose untamed soul had caught a serious, perhaps a wistful, shade from the spectacle of Emma's crowned life; and of Mrs. Jennings, who had lost a little of her absolutism, and was the embodiment of motherly sweetness to the happy trio, to all of whom she was the loved "mamma."

Before they came back to town I had gone to other skies. I had promised to "stand up" with Charley; but before the day came round fate and a doctor had intervened, and the ocean rolled between us.

The years go on, and more than one has dropped to the rear since that day of marriage bells. Messages come to me in far-away corners, and grow old in the transit; but they tell me all is well with Charley in the new life. His father, I hear, has practically withdrawn from the street, and the young man gives a certain guidance to the affairs of the great office in his place; but I have been informed that the old name will soon disappear altogether from its ancient niche, and be known no more in the active mart. Meantime a river-side nest has sprung up among the cedars, where, years ago, three laughing children chased butterflies and filled the shady hollows with the echoes of their simple nursery songs. It is hallowed ground now. Of those young voices some are silent, and will sing no more on earth; but the memory is sweet to Charley Wales and his beautiful wife, who are dwelling there among the treasured scenes, having realized the hope of their lives after many perils and grievous pains.

I was standing alone, only the other day, at a corner of the grand Promenade at Nice. A few people moved lazily along the walk, and a thin line of vehicles clattered by me in the roadway. The wonderful *trottoir* of other days, which for animation and display in the winter time was without a rival in Europe, was now a desolate shadow of itself, and shrouded in a gloom which needed not the presence of maimed men in uniform and sad-faced women begging aid in the name of the Geneva Cross to heighten its sombreness. From the long line of noble villas all signs of life had fled. The great Casino gates were closed and locked, and a subscription-box hung thereon with the ever-present appeal of *Secours aux Blessés* staring at the passer-by.

Standing thus and gazing idly down at the rock-strewn beach, where the low-voiced Mediterranean waves followed out each other in tranquil succession and broke without sound upon the stones, I had lost myself in a vague, dreamy meditation which *drifted away into* seaside fancies of a thousand things, — mostly sad they were. I had been wondering, indeed, if there might not be a thread of meaning in that eternal and unending wave-song at my feet, if in the soft swash of those wonderful azure waters, over which fair Helen of old fled to luckless Troy, and on whose "sounding shore" blind Homer sang, there was not some unknown measure of words, which, if we could but interpret them, would tell us such tales of wonder of the ages dead and gone and the great souls who faded with them, as would shame the poor lives and the feeble deeds of to-day.

And still as I stood and dreamed two shattered relics of my race came and sat on a bench near by: one, a soldier of the line, in soiled red pants and a tattered great-coat of blue; the other, a Garibaldian, in a crimson shirt and cap and enormous jack-boots.

"I lost my arm at Dijon, comrade," said the last; "and you —?"

"I was shot down at Villejuif, under the walls of Paris."

Paris? The name had lost its meaning; from the soldier's lips it fell like that of a buried thing whom yesterday we called man and friend, and who to-day is dust.

There is no longer a Paris. A hideous spectre decked in cheap tinsel, a painted and bedizened thing, will flaunt itself to-morrow before the world, and borrow the old name to conceal the fraud. But no one will be deceived, and all will turn away weary and sick at heart to see the Mænad revel where ruled the queen. *La reine est morte*, and there is no succession.

People are coming and going in the walk, and a murmur that flies swiftly among them reaches me and disturbs my fancies. I turn with indolent curiosity and follow the direction of the general gaze. Down the broad avenue a pony-phaeton moves rapidly, driven by a lady who sits alone, — the groom in his perch behind can hardly be called a companion, — and I am able only to catch a glimpse of her face, as the fairy equipage flashes past. But its cold yet marvellous beauty thrills me with a strange feeling, while more than one voice in that outspoken throng comes to my ear, "How lovely she is still!"

It is not strange to me, that clear mixed profile, with the smouldering gray eyes and the pallid but rounded cheeks. I saw it first amid the strange surroundings of the great *rouge-et-noir* table at Monaco, and had gazed with wonder at that magnificent but icy framework of a soul. She was playing, — playing with a listless, contemptuous hand that tossed thousands upon the cloth with an air of utter indifference, and a face that gave no token, only that in its very immobility one might read the epitaph of feeling. While I watched it the cold, careless eyes

n me and lingered for an instant
nething like a flash in their clear
I felt myself flush and tremble
e scrutiny, and looked away in boy-
usion. When I turned again she
following the dealer's cards, and I
eyes no more. They told me, when
that she was Nina Choisy, and at
le the brave gentlemen shrugged
oulders at the name, and looked at
le angrily I thought.
than the name they could tell me
The woman moved in their world
moved apart. Not that she was
achable, but a certain indefinable
had attached itself to her name. The
had sought favor at her hands came
scomfited, and, warned by the ex-
nen withdrew, and ventured no more
the siege perilous. That they respected her was evident from the fact that they never spoke of her.

And she?—she had lived on after the wreck that left her stranded and desolate on the shore from which she had hoped to escape. She lives still the passive, aimless life of a strong but unresisting soul which has been beaten to earth by the hand it loved, and cares to rise no more.

Stone her, if you will, ye righteous, and waken thus, as it seems your part to do, the evil that would fain sleep. Drive innocence mad by the cry of madness. Fan the spark which unnoticed would die, until you burn the world. Cry havoc, and tell us of our guilt. Torture us with anticipated punishment, until we shall forget the very name of goodness, and remember only evil.

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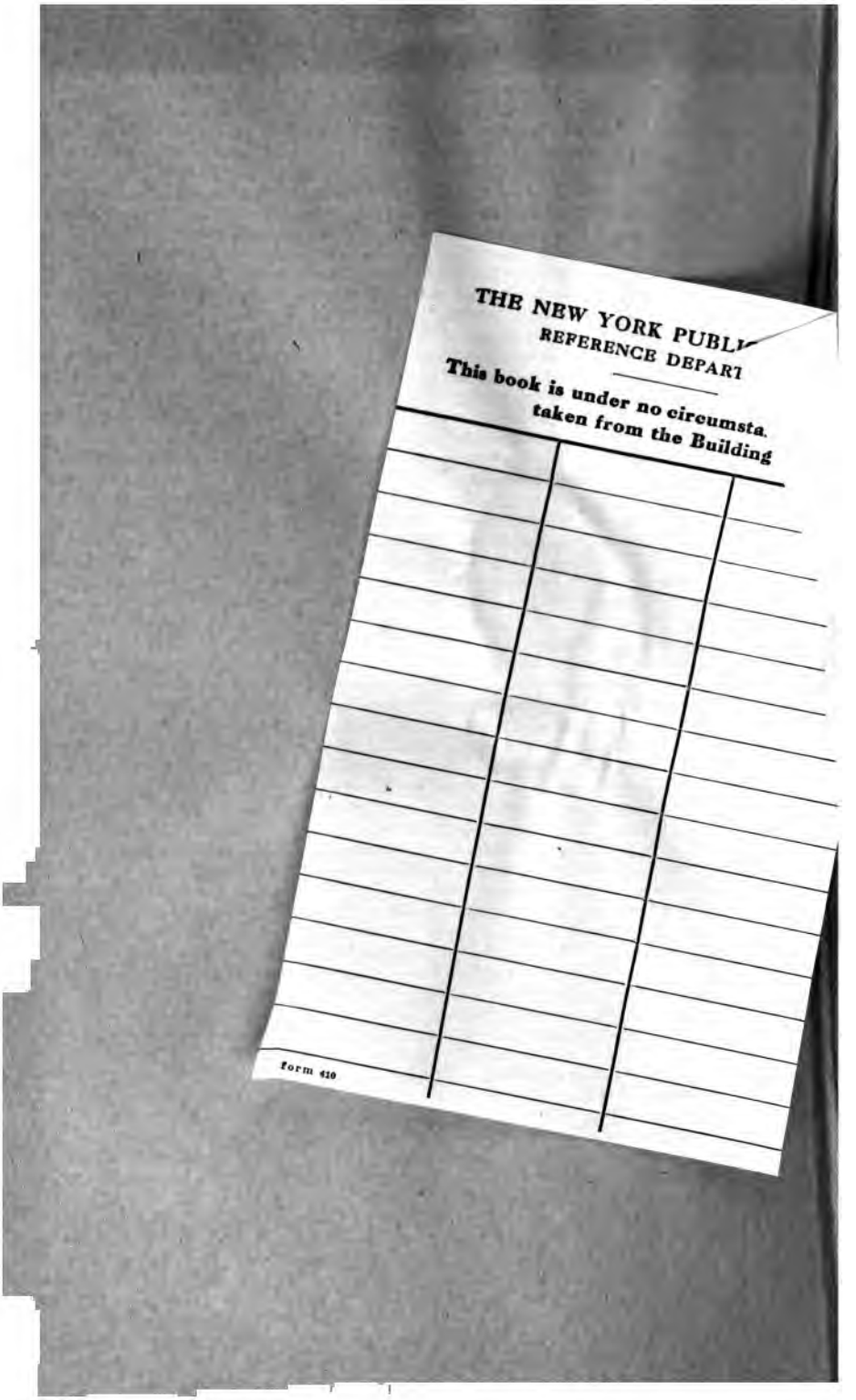
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